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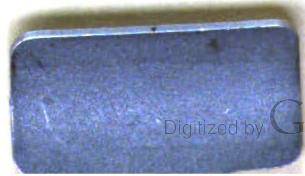
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**The  
Bible-work: 1  
Kings XII-XXII.  
2. Kings. 2  
Chronicles ...**

**James Glentworth  
Butler**







THE  
B I B L E - W O R K .

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

VOL. VII.

1 Kings XII-XXII., 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles X-XXXVI.  
Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Isaiah, Four Chapters,  
Jeremiah, Eighteen Chapters.

KINGDOM OF ISRAEL, KINGDOM OF JUDAH, CAPTIVITY AND RETURN  
HISTORY AND LITERATURE OF THE FOUR SILENT CENTURIES.

THE REVISED TEXT, ARRANGED IN SECTIONS; WITH COMMENTS SELECTED FROM THE CHOICEST,  
MOST ILLUMINATING AND HELPFUL THOUGHT OF THE CHRISTIAN CENTURIES.

PREPARED BY

J. GLENTWORTH BUTLER, D.D.

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## POINTS TO BE NOTED RESPECTING THIS VOLUME.

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1. As the closing Historical Volume of the Old Testament, its orderly place is in connection with Volume III. Volumes IV., V. and VI. (including the Psalms and the Books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon) are interposed at the end of Solomon's reign because of the relation of David and Solomon to four of these Books, while the subject-matter of the sixth (the Book of Job) brings it into close affinity with the three Books (mainly) of Solomonic origin.

2. Four chapters of Isaiah and eighteen chapters of Jeremiah are embodied in this volume for the simple reason that these chapters are essentially historical. Their contents are necessary to the completeness of the Historical Record, since they contain details either equivalent (and so confirmatory) or additional to those of the Books of Kings and Chronicles. Jeremiah, in particular, furnishes many interesting and instructive personal incidents which disclose with greater fulness the character of the later Kings of Judah, and the causes of the final destruction of the Kingdom; while he alone records the immediate after history of the Remnant of Judah.

3. This volume presents a measurably full account of the contemporary place and work of all of the Writing Prophets, whose inspired acts and disclosures constitute an integral portion of the History, so that a fair knowledge of these Prophets and the substance of their prophecies may be found herein. The volume is thus closely linked with the Prophetic Books which follow, while in those Books will be found a corresponding connection at every point with the History as herein recorded.

4. The careful attention of the reader is earnestly invited to the full and masterly Chronological Summary, kindly prepared by Professor Willis J. Beecher, contained in the Third Section. The method (generally adopted) of attaching isolated dates to specific events is purposely disregarded in this volume, for the sufficient reason that no single date of a disconnected event can convey either intelligible or helpful knowledge to a thoughtful reader. But this accurate, thoroughly digested Table of "Dated Events," if only its clear explanations and its related events with their dates are carefully studied at the outset, and afterward continuously referred to, will give an intelligent idea of the period in which every event occurred, since it exhibits such event in its relation to other contemporary events, with which it is more or less directly associated. The special study of this admirable Summary (pages 41-55) and the mastery of its chief points of historical detail is therefore strongly urged upon the reader who seeks to obtain a thorough comprehension of the Inspired History.

# CLOSING HISTORICAL VOLUME.

## Section 1.

PRELIMINARY : SUGGESTIVE THOUGHT BEARING UPON THE CHARACTER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY, AND ITS RELATIONS TO THE NEW TESTAMENT ; WITH HELPFUL EXPLANATIONS TOUCHING MINOR POINTS OF PRACTICAL INTEREST CONNECTED WITH THE HISTORY.\*

### *The Bible from God.*

THE existence and personality of God is the great postulate of the soul ; and that being granted, it is at once seen to be both a possible and a probable thing that He should communicate in some way with man in his state of conscious guilt and spiritual helplessness. The Bible claims to be such a communication ; and we can trace it up through the centuries to the dates at which its several component parts were written ; we can establish that its books were written by the men whose names they bear ; and that in their Greek and Hebrew forms they have come down to us with wonderful accuracy, so that we have more certainty that we have Paul's epistles as he wrote them than we have that the letters of Cicero to his friend Atticus are preserved in their original form. All these things are settled for the sacred books precisely as we settle the genuineness and authenticity of other ancient writings. *W. M. Taylor.*

Whoever will impartially consider the great length and variety of times and circumstances through which these *books* have passed, the many hands through which the *copies* have gone and by which they have been transcribed, and then observe how few or none of the *passages* containing any difficulty or inconsistency in them are of any weight or moment that can affect the design or use of the whole—whoever considers *this* will be so far from being disturbed at the *difficulties* he may find in the present *copies* of these or any other of the *Holy Books*, that he must conclude it a wonderful

blessing of Providence that hath preserved these writings so uncorrupt and entire as they are. *Pyle.*

The Bible grew by degrees to its present size ; and as in a house stone is laid on stone and story built upon story, so book was added to book, history to history, prophecy to prophecy, gospel to gospel, and one epistle to another, till the hands of John laid on the copestone, and, standing on the pinnacle of this sacred edifice, he pronounced God's wide and withering curse on all who should impair its integrity. *Guthrie.*

The Old Testament history, throughout a period of some thousand years, written by different hands, and at many different times, not only exhibits a series of events, arranged and exclusively designed to prepare the way for the advent of the Messiah, and the accomplishment of the plan of salvation, but has woven into its very texture all the doctrines and duties of Christianity—doctrines and duties not fully developed nor understood till the coming of Christ, but now to be clearly traced in the ancient records. Can there be a doubt about the Author of the history? It would be as easy to counterfeit the heavens and the earth as to forge such a series of documents. The Bible, then, must be the book of God. *Haldane.*

Who but God could make the Bible? What eye but that which surveys the world at a glance, and beholds all nations, with their multifarious ills and complicated wants, as they are, and reads with intuitive certainty the moral pulsation of every heart, could see far enough and wide enough and deep enough for such a work? What but the all-comprehensive mind could devise a religious system, humble in its grandeur and majestic in its simplicity, which

\* The reader is referred to the first thirty-three pages of Volume III., of which these pages are designed as a supplement and completion. Though the topics are, in part, the same, the treatment will not be found redundant. B.

should be equally applicable to men in every nation and every age ; which has power to reclaim the heart and control the life ; to disarm the world of its enmity against God ; to restore the wanderer ; raise the disconsolate, and light up a smile on the pale cheek of death? Surely, this is no common undertaking. There is but one Being who ever thought of doing it ; and the volume that reveals this purpose has, written deeply and indelibly upon its sacred page, *the signature of God.* *Beman.*

The Scriptures of the Old Testament that have been so faithfully preserved and so fully attested contain the most satisfactory and convincing internal evidences of their truth. The character of God which they exhibit, nowhere delineated in the writings of any of the wisest of this world, unenlightened by revelation, is such as carries with it its own confirmation. The character they give of man is verified in the history of every nation and of each individual. The majesty, purity, and suitableness to the condition of man, of the doctrine they contain—the soundness and unrivalled excellence of the moral precepts they inculcate, and the glory of the succeeding dispensation which toward their close they indicate with increasing clearness ; and all this confirmed and verified in the minutest particulars by the New Testament Scriptures—form a body of internal evidence, to which nothing but the deep corruption of the human heart could render any one insensible. *Haldane.*

We take these Scriptures, and observe their entire coincidence and harmony, through all their extent and amid all their varieties, in the utterance of one vast spiritual system. We go over their whole range and find them all agreeing upon this, though written by so many and such different persons : Revelation answering to Genesis across the passage of centuries—Deep calling unto Deep ;—and the inference seems inevitable that they come to us from God ; that One controlling and infinite Mind has been moving in the midst of these changing circumstances. And then we take the system itself which they reveal to us ; we observe its unity, its vast sublimity, its absolute purity ; we notice how it meets all man's wants and satisfies his powers, how it interweaves itself at the edges with the ascertained truths of philosophy or of science, accepting them all and reconciling their differences ; we see how it points to other departments and realms of truth harmonious with itself, which God sees constantly, but which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and of which no angelic messenger has brought to us

a report—and everywhere we find in this system the signatures of Divinity. We accept it as from God. Then we look to its results, and they are all beneficent. So we *know* it to be God's. *Storrs.*

*The Old and New Testaments, Two Phases of One Revelation.*

In his characteristic and terse way the church father Augustine defines the relation existing between the two Testaments in these words : *In Veteri Testamento Novum latet, in Novo Vetus patet* (in the Old Testament, the New lies hid ; in the New, the Old lies open). The full appreciation of the fundamental truth contained in these words is becoming more and more a feature of the evangelical biblical research of our day. That the two Testaments represent the two phases of the one revelation, differing from each other not in kind, but only in degree, and that the two form the one revelation and history of revelation from God to fallen man, to restore him to his lost estate, is the accepted position of all but negative scholars. In principle the two Testaments are thus one ; the New is rooted in the Old, and can find its true interpretation only from this standpoint. . . . The entire New Testament consciously and *ex professo* stands upon the basis of the Old, of which it is the continuation and completion. The words in Luke 24 : 44 are fundamental on this point. And when the New thus refers to the Old, it is solely and alone to the canonical writings of the latter, to the Palestinian collection of Hebrew sacred books. It is a singular and most significant fact that neither directly nor indirectly have any other writings of that day and generation exerted a material influence upon the contents of the New Testament. There is not a single indication of a non-canonical book having been quoted or having in the substance of the New Testament books influenced the writers or the speakers. The appeal, direct and indirect, is always to the canonical books of the Old as the sole authority and source of knowledge. The New Testament literature, which by no means is hermetically sealed to other writings, as is seen from its use of Septuagint, its citations of Greek poets, its moving and living in the atmosphere of its age, in the establishment of its principles and doctrines, builds upon and appeals solely and alone to the canonical writings of the Old Testament, and to these alone, because they and they alone are the inspired Revelation of God to man. For the New Testament the unity of the Old is a fixed and fundamental fact.

And this is in full agreement with the character of the biblical books. They are the record of a gradual unfolding of God's plans for the redemption of man, and, in fact, this is the golden chord that connects them all and makes them one. The sacred literature of no other people can lay claim to this unique feature. While it may be difficult at present to assign to each and every book its peculiar position and necessary rôle in the development, yet it must not be forgotten that some of the books are as yet imperfectly understood. But this is known, that these books, as far as clearly understood, represent the different stages in one process, the development of principles from germ to full fruit. In this process these books, one and all, have some portion or part to record; and it would be difficult to show that even the smallest could be omitted without in one or the other material point injuring our understanding of the unfolding of God's kingdom on earth; and, on the other hand, there is no material stage in this process on which the canonical writings are silent. Internally they constitute a oneness; their unity is undeniable. Comparative religious science can claim no phenomenon of this kind for any other nation. Even when under the scalpel of modern criticism, the truth that the Scriptures practically constitute one volume, consisting of parts mutually complementary and supplementary, remains. *Schodde.*

Christianity recognizes in the Old Dispensation its divinely ordained preparatory stage. This peculiar connection between the two Testaments, their different stages of revelation being fraught with one and the same spirit and constituting a marvellous whole, is a witness to the Divine origin of the *Jewish*, as well as the Christian religion. When we examine into the Books of the two Testaments we find, both in their history and doctrine, a connection extending through centuries, a gradual progress which points to one comprehensive plan which could by no possibility have had its origin in the mind of short-lived man, but can only be reasonably explained by that Divine causation to which the Bible itself refers all things; and if we proceed further to test this conclusion by comparing it with our knowledge of other kinds, we shall find that not only do the Divine revelations intimately agree together, but with the condition and needs of our human nature, with the fundamental relations of the universe, and with the being of God. Incomparable wisdom, holiness, and love breathe on us from the Scripture pages, and perfectly satisfy the demands of conscience and the search

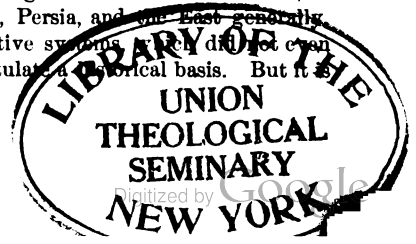
of the intellect after the highest truth. Hess of Zurich says: "Nothing has so convinced me of the truth of Christianity, its revelation, history, and doctrine, as the having found in the sacred records, on the one hand, what perfectly satisfies the needs of humanity for time and eternity, and, on the other hand, in the Divine provision toward this end such a connected progress from small to great, from the particular to the universal, as would have been impossible to human invention." *Auberlen.*

The full sense of the New Testament can only be reached by a thorough study of the Old Testament upon which it was founded. The connection between them is a living organic connection, as between the seed and the fruit. It was the same Being, the same Divine will, the same fundamental principles of salvation that were taught in the one as in the other. These facts are essential to the right understanding of Scripture, and he must sorely miss the meaning of the New Testament who lets go his hold upon the conviction of the eternal truth of the Old. *Gardiner.*

#### *History the Basis of Both Testaments.*

We cannot read the Old Testament without seeing that the whole of it rests on the basis of a history—the history contained in what we call the books of Moses. Now, if you turn to the New Testament, you will find that it begins, in like manner, with a history: the history of the four Gospels; and what the Pentateuch is to the Old Testament, the Gospels are to the New. Here, then, is a symmetry in the two parts of the Bible. Each begins with a history which pervades and inspires all that follows. Only, the two histories are different, while they are connected. The one is that of a divinely chosen people, selected for a special purpose. The other is that of a Divine Person. And a person is superior to a people merely as a people, as a corporate body, for a person has an immortality: a nation has not; and a person can be charged with far higher lessons than a nation. The two histories are on two planes, a lower and a higher; the lower is imperfect without the higher, and the higher assumes and completes the lower. *Ker.*

Christianity, including therein the dispensation of the Old Testament, is in nothing more distinguished from the other religions of the world than in its objective or historical character. The religions of Greece and Rome, of Egypt, India, Persia, and the East generally, were speculative systems which did not even seriously postulate a historical basis. But it is





otherwise with the religion of the Bible. There, whether we look to the Old or the New Testament, to the Jewish dispensation or to the Christian, we find a scheme of doctrine which is bound up with facts; which depends absolutely upon them; which is null and void without them; and which may be regarded as for all practical purposes established if they are shown to deserve acceptance. As a religion of fact, and not merely of opinion—as one whose chief scene is this world, and whose main doctrines are events exhibited openly before the eyes of men—as one, moreover, which, instead of affecting a dogmatic form, adopts from first to last, with very rare exceptions, the historical shape, the religion of the Bible comes necessarily within the sphere of the historical inquirer, and challenges him to investigate it according to what he regards as the principles of his science. Moreover, as Christianity is in point of fact connected intimately with certain records, and as those records extend over a period of several thousands of years, and “profess to contain a kind of abridgment of the history of the world,” its points of contact with profane history are (practically speaking) infinite; and it becomes impossible for the historical inquirer to avoid the question, in what light he is to view the documents which, if authentic, must exercise so important an influence over his studies and conclusions. G. R.

### THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES.

An examination of the chief characteristics of the Hebrew Scriptures indicates: a *Vital Connection between Religion and History*; a *unity of thought, sentiment, and practical aim underlying their great variety of form*, and a *progressive development of religious doctrine*, not final, but pointing forward to a fuller unfolding.

1. In these Old Testament Scriptures, *religion is shown as the soul of history*; the supreme reality and central power in human affairs; the deepest foundation of human life. The Bible account of the **ORIGIN OF RELIGION** is that man began his journey on this globe not as a deserted orphan, turned adrift to seek God as best he could, but in communion with the Father of spirits. God talked with him, and he could talk with God. God marked for him the path of duty, and it lay in his choice to walk in it or to wander from it. Compared with recent hypotheses of the slow and painful ascent of man from irrational, speechless, lawless, godless apethood, the Bible account has at

all events the advantage of dignity, beauty, intelligibility, and analogy with the known facts of human experience. In Genesis God is shown as the ultimate source of all being, preparing the earth from the beginning to be the home of man. Man's very existence is traced to God's purpose to realize His own likeness in human nature. Man is shown as conversant with God, as soon as he began to know himself and the world around him. The foundations of marriage, property, labor, moral duty and responsibility, are all laid in God's revealed will, and man's conscious relation to his Maker. Moral evil, or sin, is represented as wilful disobedience to the known will of God. The tendency to evil is shown to be hereditary as well as personal, and teeming with seeds of increase. Human life is regarded as a whole; and God is seen as the Ruler and Judge of Mankind, as well as the personal Friend and Saviour of every one who fears and trusts Him. **FAITH**, as the mainspring and sheet anchor of the religious life; **PRAYER**, as direct personal converse with the Unseen Father of spirits, and as actually heard and answered by Him; and **DIVINE PROVIDENCE** as regulating all human affairs from the greatest to the least, are so exemplified in these ancient Hebrew annals, that the story of Abraham, of Jacob, of Joseph, possesses an undecaying charm for Christian minds of the highest spiritual culture. They are typical for all time. No example of after ages has been able to cast them into the shade. In the “Pentateuch” there is no break of continuity. The narrative passes briefly over the centuries, at first of peaceful prosperity, then of bitter adversity, during which Israel's descendants “increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty.” It hastens to tell the story of the deliverance from bondage, and of the creation of an organized nation.

With the narrative of the Exodus, the forty years in the wilderness, and the conquest of Canaan, is interwoven the record of the National Code and Constitution, political, religious, moral, and social. The historic reality of the Divine manifestation to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, is assumed as the necessary starting-point of God's dealings with their descendants. His promise to Abraham is treated as a “covenant,” to which Divine faithfulness stands irrevocably pledged. But a new starting-point is given immediately after the deliverance, by a fresh “covenant” granted by Jehovah, and freely accepted by the people (Ex. 19: 3-8). This description of the founding of a nation, and laying the basis of national legislation, by

a solemn contract of sovereignty and obedience between the Almighty Creator and the representatives of the whole nation, is absolutely unique in its sober majesty, severe literal reality, and moral grandeur. On the basis thus laid, the whole fabric of legislation and framework of national life, according to the books of Moses, rested. All the subsequent history proceeds from this starting-point. The religion of personal faith, prayer, and obedience, depicted in Genesis, is never lost sight of; but it is overshadowed by the religion of national faith, public worship, and obedience to the law binding on the nation. The Ten Commandments and the subsequent laws given by Moses are expressed in such a form that the word "Thou" may apply equally to the individual Israelite or to the nation. Divine providence and government are illustrated on a corresponding scale. The wanderings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the sufferings and glory of Joseph, illustrate God's care and control of PERSONAL history down to its least details. Egypt, the Red Sea, Sinai, the desert, the manna, the water from the rock, the pillar of cloud and fire, teach a like lesson in regard to NATIONAL history, on a scale never equalled, never to be repeated.

The connection between Religion and History, noticed above as the first great distinctive character of the religion of the Old Testament Scriptures, is strongly marked with regard to the three essential elements of the system set up by Moses: the tabernacle, the Priesthood, the Sacrificial Ritual. All three, in the records which have come down to us, are inseparably interwoven with the main facts of Hebrew story—the deliverance from Egypt, the encampment at Sinai, the covenant between Jehovah and His people, the giving of the Law, the stubborn rebelliousness of Israel, and the consequent delay of their entrance into Canaan until the death of Moses in the fortieth year from the Exodus.

As the recorded history of ancient Israel furnishes the only key to the religion of the Old Testament, otherwise inexplicable, so the religion bears witness to the history. Solomon's Temple presupposes the Tabernacle. It actually contained the Ark. But the Ark and the Tabernacle presuppose the wandering in the Wilderness; which in its turn presupposes Sinai and the Deliverance. The whole history from the birth of Samuel attests the importance of both the Ark and the Tabernacle. David's institutions, which survived the Captivity and lasted into the Christian era, attest the national

importance and numerical strength of the tribe of Levi; their sacred character; and the hereditary priesthood of the descendants of Aaron. How can these (joined with the fact that Levi was a landless tribe) be explained apart from a legislation coeval with the existence of the nation? In a word, is it rationally conceivable that a nation so numerous, compact, tenacious of tradition, yet sturdily independent, prone to strife, and obstinately addicted to forbidden rites, should have been persuaded (before, during, or after the reigns of David and Solomon) to receive a body of new institutions, forged laws, and fictitious public annals, and that this astonishing fabrication, unparalleled in all literature, should have gained that prodigious hold on national belief and reverence which the writings ascribed to Moses undeniably possessed after the return from Babylon? The demands made on our faith by modern sceptical criticism far exceed in fact those made by all the miracles of the Bible.

Further, as matter of historic fact, an unbroken living chain of religious faith, teaching, sympathy, prayer, and practice connects the tent of Abraham and the legislation of Sinai, through the life and teaching of Jesus, with the religious life of modern Christendom, and with the moral power (the only one yet discovered) which has shown itself capable in the Sandwich Islands, in Polynesia, in New Guinea, in Madagascar, in South and Central Africa, of lifting half-barbarous or wholly savage and brutal tribes into civilization, morality, and liberty.

2. The intimate blending of history and religion, which we have noted as the first great characteristic of the Hebrew Scriptures, is the condition of the two other characteristics also indicated: *Unity* and *Development*. These may be best considered together. For development implies unity. And the unity discoverable in the Bible is a unity of growth; not formal and mechanical, but vital, internal, spiritual.

Clearly, if the books of the Old Testament possess any real unity, it must be of this nature. For they do not compose a *Book* in any ordinary sense of the word. They are a library, a literature. They range over a thousand years. Their writers differ widely in character, genius, education, position. They reflect the most opposite phases of national life. Diversity of contents and variety of form could scarcely be more strongly exemplified than in this collection of annals, laws, biography, poems, aphorisms, prophetic oracles. If the unity of these sacred writings were merely artificial and con-

ventional, conferred by authority and custom, it would dissolve at the touch of serious examination. If, on the contrary, deep below this diversified and broken surface we find a unity of thought, an unbroken vein of religious teaching, growing richer from age to age, then this unity is a fact more important than the diversity. It must have an adequate cause. It demands an intelligent explanation. If natural causes cannot explain it, we must infer supernatural. If human authors could not (or manifestly did not) combine to produce it, the only possible explanation is Divine Authorship. And such unity, progressively unfolding itself, does actually characterize the Hebrew sacred writings. The central conception which gives unity to their religious teaching is found in *the moral character of God, in personal relation with mankind and with each human being*. The Book of Genesis opens with affirming the deepest relation we and all other beings sustain to God as our Creator. Creation appears in the record as an orderly process, crowned with the birth of man. Man is represented as from the first placed in direct moral relations with his Maker. A specially prepared home, work, the Sabbath, marriage, and a positive command, the test of obedience, bless and fence his life. Disobedience is represented as putting him in a sadly altered relation to God. He is called to account, found guilty, sentenced to the loss of Eden, made subject to death. Nevertheless, man retains his highest privilege—direct converse with his Maker.

We search in vain the sacred books and the entire literature of pagan nations for any adequate parallel to these representations of the absolute authority and just severity of the Creator, united with fatherly tenderness toward the sinner, and effort to win to repentance and hold him back from sin. As examples, we may refer to the startling description of Divine sorrow over man's sin, and the hundred and twenty years' respite granted in Noah's time to the doomed world; the place assigned to intercession, as of Abraham for Sodom, of Moses and Samuel for Israel, of Job for his friends; the pathetic warnings of Moses to Israel; the echo of those warnings by his successor, Joshua; Samuel's faithful and solemn rebuke to the National Assembly, joined with the assurance that the Lord would "not forsake His people, for His great name's sake;" Isaiah's call to come and reason together with God, joined with a gracious promise of pardon to the penitent; Jeremiah's thunderbolts of terror, flashing and pealing through a tempest

of tears; Ezekiel's trumpet blast of warning; the homely remonstrance and final warning of the latest of the prophets. The list might be indefinitely extended. The preaching of John the Baptist, the last prophet of the Old Testament, sounded afresh the key-note which thus rings through the Hebrew Bible. Its full-toned harmony is heard in the preaching of Jesus: in His invitation to the "laboring and heavy-laden;" His picture of the prodigal returning to his father; His lament over impenitent Jerusalem. From these specimens it is clear that a consistent strain of teaching, in the form not of dogma, but of historic narrative and practical appeal, pervades the books of the Old Testament. Human life is everywhere regarded in direct moral relation to Divine law, authority, and mercy. The aim throughout is not to inform and convince the intellect, but to affect and control the affections, conscience, and conduct.

Thus we are brought back to the central conception which gives unity to the religious teaching of the whole body of the Hebrew Scriptures, *the moral character of God, in personal relation with mankind and with each human being*. This great central doctrine (which includes the truths of man's personality, moral character, and accountableness) is developed by means of human history and experience—especially the experience of sin. Four main lines of illustration combine to unfold this greatest of lessons: 1. Public history, especially as concerned with those calamities which the Scriptures represent as Divine judgments on sin: as the Deluge, the destruction of Sodom, the overthrow of Pharaoh, the punishment of the rebellious Israelites, the extermination of the depraved idolaters of Canaan, the Babylonish captivity, the overthrow of Babylon. 2. Symbolic worship and priestly mediation. 3. Prophetic ministry, interpreting God's law, will, truth, and promises. 4. Personal experience; vividly illustrating, on the one hand, the care and guidance of God's providence, and leading and teaching of His Spirit, bestowed on those who fear Him; on the other hand, the life of faith, penitence, prayer, and loving obedience to God. In this last method the teaching of the three other methods is brought to a practical focus. It may be summed up in the words in which the most sorrowful of the prophets, in the most mournful book of Scripture, utters his peaceful faith: "The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. 3: 25). *E. R. Conder.*

*Structural Characteristics of the Old Testament.*

In the Old Testament we have a national literature; not one book, but many, a whole library or collection of books, with certainly not less than twenty-five writers, extending over a period of at least a thousand years. In so long a space of time we should naturally expect to find a great difference in language. Think of the difference in language between the English of modern London, and that tongue that was spoken here—for we cannot call it English—in the time of Alfred the Great, who came to the throne a thousand years ago. In fact, the language of Chaucer, which is somewhere midway between these two extremes, and rather nearer to our own time than to that of Alfred, is not commonly intelligible now. But it is not too much to say that the language of Moses and the language of Malachi are identical. The one writer would have had no difficulty in understanding the other. There are indeed slight indications of change in the language of the two; but it is, after all, the same language. The difference between Chaucer and Shakespeare is far greater than that between Moses and Malachi. The differences that do exist correspond to dialectical variations rather than differences of age; and it is a fact which we may endeavor to account for in various ways, that the language of the Old Testament does not present those marked differences of age that we should expect to find in compositions separated by long periods of time, and which are met with in the literature of other languages. The Hebrew Bible does not contain probably a tenth part of the vocabulary of the language as it was spoken at any one period, and several books are so short and so various in their subject-matter, that it could hardly be otherwise than that many words should be used by one writer, which would not be found in another. Almost every book has certain words peculiar to itself, and in some cases (as Job and Canticles) the number of these is very large. The Old Testament is composed in two cognate but totally distinct languages. By far the greater portion of it is written in Hebrew; but certain parts of Ezra (4 : 8-6 : 18, and 7 : 12-26), one verse of Jeremiah (10 : 11), and certain parts of Daniel (2 : 4b-7) are in Chaldee, which is presumed to have been the language acquired and spoken by the Jews during the Captivity, and which after their return gradually superseded the ancient biblical Hebrew. This language approximates more nearly to that used on the Assyrian monuments, which are Semitic,

and not Persian or Scythic; to the language of the Targums, or the Chaldee paraphrases of certain portions of the Scriptures; to the Syriac of the oldest translation of the New Testament; and to it may be assigned those few Semitic words which are found in the Greek of the New Testament. On the other hand, the pure biblical Hebrew is more nearly represented by the language of the Phœnician inscriptions, and, above all, by that of the famous Moabite Stone.

The difference between these two languages is a difference of grammar, and not merely of vocabulary. There are, indeed, in several books, certain peculiarities of form, which are termed Chaldaisms, but these are for the most part trifling variations, consisting frequently of nothing more than a change of letter, and, however they are to be accounted for, are not sufficient to indicate the gradual approximation of the one dialect to the other. The difference between Hebrew and Chaldee is analogous to that between French and Italian, rather than to that between any two dialects of either language, or of our own. We have evidence from Scripture itself that a person speaking in Chaldee would not have been understood by an ordinary Jew, and the reverse from the request made to Rabshakeh (Isa. 36 : 11 and 2 K. 18 : 26). Another point to be noted is the family of languages to which the dialects of the Old Testament belong. This is what is called the Semitic family, comprising, for the most part, the languages spoken by the descendants of Shem. These are chiefly the Hebrew, the Arabic, the Syriac, the Chaldee, and the Ethiopic. Besides the Arabic and Ethiopic, another modern representative of this family exists in the Maltese. The Semitic languages are totally distinct in structure and formation, as well as vocabulary, from the Aryan or Indo-Germanic family, to which Greek, the language of the New Testament, and Latin and Gothic, the parents of our own, all belong.

From the existence of the Septuagint, from the reference in the preface to Ecclesiasticus, and from the testimony of Josephus, we can trace backward the pedigree of the Old Testament for a period of three hundred years from the birth of Christ. It is equally certain that at that time it must have acquired a considerable amount of celebrity to have been translated at Alexandria, more especially as the strong antipathy of the Greeks to the Jews would have prejudiced them against the Jewish literature, while for the use of the Jews themselves, who were living there, such a translation was not wanted. The fact, therefore, of this Greek version ex-

isting when it did is itself an evidence of a certain prior antiquity in the book ; and whether the version was that of a part only or the whole, for the Law would naturally be translated first, it matters little, because it would have been an absolute impossibility that any books that were translated afterward should have originated in the interval, or, supposing them to have originated, should have acquired sufficient celebrity to be translated. For it must be borne in mind that though the Septuagint contains books which are not in the Hebrew, there are no books in the Hebrew which the Septuagint does not contain.

In an analysis of its structure and contents, the first thing which strikes us about the Old Testament, regarding it for the moment as a single book, is the multiplicity of its topics and the variety of its contents. This is, of course, less remarkable when we remember that though conventionally regarded as one book, it is really a national literature ; and almost every species of writing finds its representative in the Old Testament. There are legal documents, sacrificial prescriptions, and ritual ordinances ; there are family records and genealogical tables ; there are complete historical monuments of the nation from its very infancy till the time when it ceased to have the distinct individual existence of the past. These monuments, though indeed much more meagre than we could desire, are none the less complete, inasmuch as they form, as it were by accident, a connected whole. The gaps which exist appear to be left almost by design. For example, we have few details given us of the wanderings, next to none of the captivity, but in either case this was not so much because an historian was lacking, as because, apparently from his point of view, the materials were deficient in interest. To us the record of these would have been most precious ; nor can we conceive any period of the national history when it would not have been so to the nation ; but, as a matter of fact, those who were directly interested in it, Moses, Daniel, and the rest, have passed it by in silence. Then, in addition to the history, we have poetry of every kind, elegiac, pastoral, warlike, devotional ; poetry which, in the range of its subjects, and in the scope of its object, need fear comparison with none in any language, and, indeed, in this last respect is incomparably superior to all other poetry. Then there are ethical treatises, collections of moral maxims for the guidance of conduct, and speculations as to the destiny of man, and attempts at the solution of the mystery of his being, which

have even now lost none of their interest ; added to which there is in the Hebrew literature a cosmogony which alone, of all the cosmogonies of the ancient world, has at the present time, in the midst of the light and discoveries of modern science, any sort of claim to come into competition with it. There is no other which any one would even dream of attempting to reconcile with or oppose to the present condition of scientific knowledge, no other which is entitled to the smallest consideration as embodying any truth, whether physical or otherwise.

A similar variety is to be perceived also in the several writers whose works are comprised in the Old Testament. They are of all classes and occupations. There is the king, the priest, the warrior, the sage, the chorister in the temple, the cupbearer in the palace, the chamberlain in the court, and the herdsman in the field ; and if we cannot add to the list, it is only because the scanty information we possess about certain individuals does not enable us to do so. *S. Leathes.*

#### *The Traditional Order of the Old Testament Books the True Order.*

Two considerations deserve to be borne in mind. First, that supposing the books of the Old Testament to be genuine, any dislocation of their real historical order (such as the conjecture that portions of the Pentateuch were written by Ezekiel or by Ezra) must altogether confuse and disguise their religious teaching. Secondly, that if these books, taken in their traditional order, exhibit a unity and progress which disappear on any other arrangement, a powerful argument will be supplied that the traditional order is the true order. If the pieces of a model fitted in one order produce a symmetrical building, and in any other arrangement a shapeless heap, no sane mind doubts which of these shows the design with which they were fashioned. *E. R. Conder.*

#### *The Credibility of the History as Recorded.*

We learn to appreciate this on internal grounds, and mainly for two reasons. There is no evidence of individual partiality on the part of the writers. The greatest characters are drawn without regard to the sympathies that may be presumed to be on their side. David's vices are recorded with the stern severity of truth. If the writer seems almost for a moment to be carried away with admiration for the greatness of Solomon, he is not slow to depict his disgraceful fall, and that in such terms

that certain critics have rejected the story as altogether incredible. But the same impartiality is observable as regards the nation and the national honor that we see as regards the principal personages of it. The impression left on the reader's mind, after closing the books of Kings, is one certainly not favorable to the nation. Wonderful victories have at times been won, but they are attributed less to national prowess than to the Divine protection, and very often it is defeat, and not victory, that is recorded; while from a moral point of view, ingratitude, unfaithfulness, apostasy, are the very serious charges continually advanced against the nation. On both these grounds there is a natural presumption in favor of the writer's credibility. In fact, this would probably never be questioned if it were not for another feature too prominent to escape observation, and this is the strong undercurrent of Divine interposition which everywhere runs through the whole narrative. The question, of course, is how this is to be dealt with. The ordinary historian and philosopher will at once set it aside. But it seems strange to do so hastily, when, as we have seen, there is so much on other grounds to dispose us to trust the narrative—more especially as this undercurrent of Divine interposition is ever associated with a claim to the possession of Divine knowledge. The writer professes to know how a man's conduct was estimated in the Divine judgment; he claims to know something of the Divine purposes, as well as to record instances of the Divine interposition. These things, however much they may affect his credibility in ordinary matters, must evidently stand or fall together. The question is whether his acknowledged general credibility throws more credit on his statements in these matters, than his statements on these matters tend to bring discredit upon him in the others. And this is simply a question of preponderating evidence. The only thing to be said is that there are many features in the history as we accept and cannot but accept it, merely in its human aspect, that are certainly more consistent than inconsistent with the tenor of these remarkable statements. The history in its merely natural features is a unique and unparalleled phenomenon in literature. There is nothing which bears any, even a remote, analogy to it in the whole literature of mankind. The obscurity, the cohesion, the consistency which characterizes its composition finds nowhere anything correspondent to it. And then the complexion and the form of the history itself, in its broadest and most obvious

features, is such as to produce in us the conviction that it is marked with the impress of the Divine finger, and overshadowed by the Divine hand, as the incidents of no other history can pretend to be. *S. Leathes.*

We may specify nine elements in the Sacred Books of the Jews as they stood about 400 B.C.—viz., their multiplicity and variety, their national, tribal, and personal interests, their genealogical, official, chronological, and topographical characteristics. Now, these things are just the class of phenomena in any literature which give it reality and stamp it as trustworthy. As we look down the long vista of narrative, hedged in as it ever is with prophecy and poetry, and reaching back from the comparatively modern period of Nehemiah to the patriarchal and pre-patriarchal ages, we feel that we are dealing, not with myths, legends, or old wives' fables, but with solid historical realities. *Girdlestone.*

It may safely be averred, putting the question of inspiration altogether out of view, that the natural character of the sacred historians ranks them with the first of human beings. In point of grandeur and sublimity of conception, of discrimination, of unaffected simplicity, of ingenuous disinterestedness, of unbending integrity, of successful execution, they are unrivalled; and it is only necessary to compare their productions with the most admired compositions of antiquity, to assign to them, unhesitatingly, the preference. *Enc. Met.*

Certainly if the Old Testament histories have the same origin as the chronicles of other nations, they present most anomalous features. Where do we find any other people whose annals contain nothing that can minister to national vanity, and have for one of their chief themes the sins of the nation? The history of Israel, as told in Scripture, is one long indictment of Israel. The peculiarity is explicable, if we believe that, whoever or how numerous soever its authors, God was its true author, as He is its true theme, and that the object of its histories is not to tell the deeds of Israel, but those of God for Israel. These continual relapses have an important bearing on the question of the origin of the "Jewish conception of God." They are intelligible only if we take the old-fashioned explanation, that its origin was a Divine revelation, given to a rude people. They are unintelligible if we take the new-fashioned explanation that the monotheism of Israel was the product of natural evolution, or was anything but a treasure put by God into their hands, which they did not ap-

preciate, and would willingly have thrown away. The foul Canaanitish worship was the kind of thing which, if left to themselves, they would have wallowed in. How came such people by such thoughts as these? The history of Israel's idolatry is not the least conclusive proof of the supernatural revelation which made Israel's religion. A. M.

Under the government of God idolatry is the greatest of crimes, a rebellion, a treason against the authority and the throne of Jehovah, and against His loyal subjects and true worshippers. It is a denial of His supremacy, His perfections, and His prerogatives; a scheme of degradation, misery, and destruction to men; a system of wickedness involving every species of immorality and corruption (as described in Rom. 1) and every element of Satanic malice and cruelty. Historically, this great system of tyranny and blood is the groundwork of the civil and social annals of a large portion of the race. It stands forth as the comprehensive organized embodiment of antagonism to the true religion; to virtue, truth, and righteousness. To counteract and prevent its universal success under the ancient dispensation, it was necessary to institute a theocratic administration over a particular community of true worshippers to preserve and protect them, and for their defence and the vindication of the Divine authority to inflict retributive and avenging judgments on the surrounding idolaters. Thus the destruction of Sodom, the plagues of Egypt, the extirpation of the Canaanites, the overthrow of other pagan nations from time to time, and the various subjections and captivities of the Israelites when they apostatized to idol worship, were successive vindications of the true God and the true religion against the arrogance and treason of idolatry. E. L.

Israel's history, from beginning to end, is one continuous miracle; and its once glorious exaltation, with its dismal fall and present condition, one of the most overwhelming proofs conceivable of the divinity of Christianity and the truth of the Bible. Its historical eminence, its pure knowledge of God, its manifold covenant privileges, Israel owed not to its own merit, but solely to the sovereign mercy of God. For the Jews were by nature, as Moses and the prophets often lament, the most stiff-necked, rebellious, and unthankful nation on earth. *Schaff*.

The continued existence of the Jewish people is the great wonder of history. No other na-

tion has so tenaciously clung to its religion and nationality, and that, too, almost without a community of language. The great nations of antiquity that dwelt round about Palestine have all perished, though scarcely ever driven from their own countries. Israel has continued, though dispersed into the whole world. It stands before us still as *the historical nation* in a pre-eminent sense, an indestructible witness to the oldest and most sacred history—amid the changes in the other nations of the world, the *guarantee of a great divine past* and a *great divine future*. *Aubertin*.

For nearly two thousand years the revelation of God's will was deposited with a single nation—the seed of Abraham. This is the sole reason why the history of the Jews is given so much more fully in the Bible than that of any other nation. It is remarkable, however, that Bible history brings us into contact, more or less close, with almost every great nation of the ancient world. Any one called on to name the greatest nations of antiquity would at once mention, in Africa—Egypt, Ethiopia, and Carthage, the daughter of Tyre; in Asia—Phœnicia, Syria, Assyria, Babylon, Arabia, and Medo-Persia; and in Europe—Greece, Macedonia, and Rome: it is remarkable that there is hardly one of these countries on which Bible history does not touch. W. G. B.

The Old Testament is, in fact, the *most reliable source* of extra-Israelitic history in so far as it touches upon it. Niebuhr, in characterizing the sources of the Assyrio-Babylonian history he had written, says: "The Old Testament alone is an exception to patriotic untruth; it never conceals or passes over a national error or reverse. *Its truthfulness is the highest thing in history*, even for him who does not believe in Divine inspiration. At the same time, I must claim for the Old Testament the minutest accuracy as well as the utmost truthfulness of *all our sources* of history." *Aubertin*.

I can bear testimony to the minute truth of innumerable incidental allusions in Holy Writ to the facts of nature, of climate, of geographical position, corroborations of Scripture, which, though trifling in themselves, reach to minute details that prove the writers to have lived when and where they are asserted to have lived; which attest their scrupulous accuracy in recording what they saw and observed around them; and which, therefore, must increase our confidence in their veracity where we cannot have the like means of testing it. I can find no discrepancies between their geographical or physical statements and the evidence of present

facts. I can find no standpoint here for the keenest advocate against the full inspiration of the scriptural record. The HOLY LAND not only elucidates, but bears emphatic witness to the truth of the HOLY BOOK. *Tristram.*

*God in History.*

The Old Testament puts its loud and extended emphasis upon the direct control of God in the life of men and nations. It affirms this so distinctly and so constantly as to leave the later Testament nothing to add in confirmation. Its histories and biographies are not presented as more divinely overruled, but only as being directed to a special purpose, indicating the particular tide, in the current of world-history, which bore the ark of salvation down the ages. God may have specially interposed at times for this end, and wrought signs and wonders which are beyond the ordinary course of His providence. But the same essential presence, knowledge, and power have mingled themselves in every drop of that current, so that no sparrow has fallen to the ground in the most remote wilderness, and no hair has fallen from the humbled head, without Him. No purpose of His has failed, and no weapon raised to arrest that purpose has prospered. Of course we do not understand this at all, and there is no use in our trying, and only impiety in our demanding, to understand it now. But the Word makes it as indisputable as the existence of God Himself. *Zabriskie.*

In reading the Old Testament history, the thoughtful reader will be able to perceive more clearly the development of the plans of Providence. He will there discover in what manner events apparently unconnected all tend in a greater or less degree to the fulfilment of some wonderful events which were previously foretold, but which at the time when these results were delivered appeared impossible to be brought about; he will perceive that all the circumstances recorded in the Scripture tend to one end, with as much regularity as the incidents in a regular drama bring about the catastrophe. He will see them combine in one purpose, prove one point, develop one mighty scheme, which was planned in the councils of Omnipotence, gradually revealed to mankind, and is still in progress among mankind. *G. Townsend.*

God in history is God not in clouds and darkness, not in repelling and reserved majesty, not in distant, silent immensity, but God descended upon the earth; moving among the nations; employing visibly and effectively every one of

His mighty attributes; setting up and pulling down; turning and overturning; pouring abroad prosperity; executing judgment; declaring His righteousness; walking in His omnipotence; intimating His counsels of wisdom; unveiling the heart of everlasting love; carrying forward in a grand, resistless course, individuals, families, nations, to the consummation of His own exalted purposes. *C. White.*

There is a living *spirit* in history, which is as the creature in the wheels of Ezekiel's vision. He who does not discern this will perceive in the records of the Church or the chronicles of time only a lifeless succession of isolated and meaningless events—the *disjecta membra* of the ages, or the anarchy of atoms in the confusion of a complicated chance work. And what can this life-spirit be but He whose presence fills all time and space, giving motion and order and beauty to the material world, and whose evolving purpose in the final historic development will bring a higher beauty and harmony to the moral world.

God is the life of the world's history as really as He is of the history of the Church, although by a different manifestation. Herder undertook a universal history on the plan of excluding Christ; a work as impracticable and absurd as the reconstruction of the solar system on a principle that leaves out the sun. The elegant historian of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" fell into a similar error. Comte finds the end of the historic course in a social or scientific regeneration of the race. The acme of Hegel's scheme is a political freedom, the idea of the old Roman commonwealth, of which Prussia has well-nigh attained the realization. But with the excellences peculiar to each of these distinguished writers, their works are essentially defective in the main element of a truly philosophical history. Their errors as philosophers made them partial and false as historians. "What is the history of the world without Christ?" exclaims Müller. What would the world be without the purpose of redemption, the pivot on which its whole government turns? Every event in its history is modified by the remedial element, of which the Church is the organized exponent. *Lawrence.*

*Redemption the Central Theme of Old and New Testaments.*

However much critics may differ in regard to the order of the successive stages in the development of Bible history and religion, they agree in recognizing in these books the official records of one process. They thus accept in



reference to the biblical books an inner unity and connection not found in the Vedas, the Avesta, the Eddas, or similar collections of sacred literatures. However deep the "chasm" may be, to use a word of the lamented Delitzsch, between the naturalistic and naturalizing schools on the one hand, and the supernatural on the other, there is practically an agreement on this point. Even for the most advanced critics the Bible books are more than an accidental collection of interesting literary remains of one of the Oriental peoples. All this is deeply significant. It demonstrates anew that there is one grand central thought and process going through the entire Scriptures, notwithstanding the great diversity of authors, objects, contents, time and character of the different books; and that this unity of thought and purpose impresses itself most emphatically upon the Bible student. This central thought is *the restoration of fallen man to the original relations established at creation between him and his God, which re-establishment is the work of God's mercy and grace, and is appropriated by confiding faith.* That this is the kernel of New Testament teaching is the common confession of all evangelical Christians. That it is equally the central thought of the Old Testament economy, in which at first glance the nomistic principle seems to be the sum and substance of the religious scheme, becomes clearer on closer examination.

That there exists between the two Testaments only a difference of degree and not of kind; that they are two stages or steps in one and the same historical development with a complete agreement of cardinal principles, is evident from the attitude of Christ and His apostles over against the official theology of their day. They appealed to the oracles of old, to the Law and the Prophets. The antagonism of the scribes and the Pharisees and other accepted teachers of the New Testament era to Christ and the Gospel, was caused by the departure of the former from the landmarks of revelation. For them the Law had become an end in itself, and was no longer the means to an end—namely, to be a "schoolmaster unto Christ," as Paul says. Nomism had usurped the prerogatives of the evangelical principle of the Old Testament Covenant, and Christ's new departure consisted in a return to the doctrines of an Isaiah, a David, and other representative types of the Old Testament economy. This one fact alone shows that the New Covenant in the eyes and purpose of its Founder was only relatively and not absolutely new; it was intended to be

only the fully unfolded and ripened fruits from the germs in the proclamations of the seers and sages of old. The central thought of both must be the same. This, too, is plainly inculcated in the New Testament, and from this standpoint alone the Old Testament economy can be understood and appreciated in its whole length, breadth, and depth. *Schodde.*

The prophecy of the Seed of the woman, which should bruise the serpent's head, is manifestly the nucleus, the single cell (to take an image from the formation of a flower) round which the whole Bible has formed itself, of which the whole is a development, on which the whole is a commentary. The great steps of the plan which runs through the Bible are very easy to trace. A nation of teachers is first reared amid various fortunes, knit together by the endurance of a common bondage, and impressed with marked national characteristics, in order that they may present a strong front to the prevailing idolatries and wickedness of the world; and in order that they may disseminate among other people of the earth the elementary religious notions which they had themselves imbibed from the Divine teaching. As soon as, through God's wonderful dealings with them, they had been thoroughly imbued with these notions, they were dispersed among the nations of the earth, and made to sojourn there. By their instrumentality a class of men called proselytes are raised up in Gentile countries, who, attracted by the elements of truth which there were in the Mosaic religion, adopt it, and become eventually the bridge by which the Gospel passes from the Jewish to the Gentile mind. The way having been thus prepared for Messiah in the hearts of men, the long-promised Deliverer appears at a time of universal peace, and when the union of the civilized world under one empire was favorable to the spread of the tidings of salvation. What remains of the Sacred Volume briefly records the rapid spread of these tidings, gives certain comments upon them, and predicts the complete triumph of the Messiah's cause. Thus there is an uniform plan running through the whole of Scripture, and cementing together its various books, inasmuch as the entire Old Testament looks forward to Messiah historically—represents the stages of discipline by which the Jews, and through the Jews the human race, were prepared for His appearance. And we well know that it looks forward to Messiah in another way, typically and prophetically, and that not only all the ritual of the Jews, and all the predictions of their prophets, but also most narra-

tives of the Old Testament, foreshow His appearance in a glass darkly. Thus in the Bible, though its elements are so various, there is a glorious harmony of design, and, as the whole of it emanates from one Spirit, a harmony of agency also. E. M. G.

The history of the Old Testament is large and particular where the great affair of redemption required it, as where there was most done toward this work, and most to typify Christ, and to prepare the way for Him. Thus it is very large and particular in the history of Abraham and the other patriarchs; but very short in the account we have of the time which the children of Israel spent in Egypt. So, again, it is large in the account of the redemption out of Egypt, and the first settling of the affairs of the Jewish Church and nation in Moses' and Joshua's times; but much shorter in the account of the times of the Judges. So, again, it is large and particular in the account of David's and Solomon's times, and then very short in the history of the ensuing reigns. Thus the accounts are large or short, just as there is more or less of the affair of redemption to be seen in them. Christ and His redemption is the great subject of the prophecies of the Old Testament. He is the great subject of the songs of the Old Testament, and the moral rules and precepts are all given in subordination to Him. And Christ and His redemption are also the great subject of the history of the Old Testament from the beginning all along; and even the history of the creation is brought in as an introduction to the history of redemption that immediately follows it. The whole Book, both Old Testament and New, is filled up with the Gospel; only with this difference, that the Old Testament contains the Gospel under a veil, but the New contains it unveiled, so that we may see the glory of the Lord with open face. *Edwards.*

The traces of God's mercy and wisdom in the history of salvation come first and most clearly to light, they appear in their most wonderful and attractive form, when we see how Divine prophecy was introduced as a living and organic part of history, and how the course of history was so directed by God, and His operations therein were of such a kind, as to be constantly opening the way and preparing a place for new and more glorious forms of prophecy. I fall in the dust and worship when I thus discover how the living God was ever moving in history and prophecy, how the mercy and wisdom of God, through His adorable condescension, adapted themselves in both

of these to existing wants and circumstances. To my mind, prophecy first acquires its full value when I can see what God has done in history to prepare a fitting place for prophecy. The incarnation of God in the fulness of time loses nothing of its adorable worth, but rather gains the more, from the fact that it required a historical preparation of four thousand years. *Kurtz.*

#### *Miracles of the Old Testament.*

Just as in other history of life in general, the beginning of that life is due solely to the direct creative act of God, without the use of any means whatever, so in the beginning and founding of Christianity we have the manifestation of the direct, immediate power of God, acting in a manner independent of the ordinary laws and forces of nature. And what is true of the miracles of Christ is no less true of the miracles of the other great epochs of God's kingdom upon earth—viz., the epochs of Moses and of Elijah. The limitation of miracles to these several distinct epochs indicates that such limitation of this peculiar manifestation of Divine power is analogous to the same limitation observed in other spheres of the Divine activity. According to this view the miracle simply marks a renewed impartation of Divine creative energy, and the beginning of a new, distinct era in the history of God's kingdom on earth.

Those miracles which unquestionably stand at the head of all miracles—viz., the Incarnation, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, and the Mission of the Holy Spirit—sustain the closest possible relation to the founding of Christianity. Without these miracles no conception of Christianity is possible. The other miracles of the Bible, the miracles of the Old Testament, are mainly clustered together in two groups, occurring respectively at the two most important points in the history of the covenant people—the time of Moses and the time of Elijah. Thus the miracles of Scripture are found mainly in these three groups, and occur at the time of Moses, the time of Elijah, and the time of Christ. *Huizinga.*

The New Testament rests upon the broad foundation of the patriarchal promises, of the Mosaic institutions, of the prophetic instructions, and of the providential history recorded in the Old Testament. Independently of the light thrown back upon it from the New Testament, the miraculous history of the Old would be difficult of belief. But to him who has accepted Christ as He is revealed in the New Testament, there is no more reason for reject-

ing the miracles of the Old Testament than there is for discrediting the mass of supernatural facts connected with Christ's ministry. We are not compelled to establish the truth of each specific miraculous account by itself, but the unity of the revelation and the congruity of the whole system are such that the burden of proof is thrown upon him who would discard any Old Testament miracle. *G. F. Wright.*

The general character of the miracles of the Old Testament is that of facts, plain, palpable, in their nature, at the same time inseparably connected with other facts and histories, and always immediately necessary to the occasion on which they were exhibited. The end to be obtained by them was obvious, and was also generally, previous to their performance, distinctly announced, so that the attention of the beholders was often particularly directed to their progressive and frequently long-protracted completion. The universal deluge, the confusion of the tongues at Babel, and the destruction of the cities of the plain by fire from heaven, were visible and immediate interpositions of God for the punishment of wicked men, different from His usual mode of procedure in the government of the world. On the separation of Israel, as a nation, from the rest of mankind, and onward for many centuries, a remarkable train of miraculous interpositions was interwoven with their history and laws. Both their character and the relation in which they stand to that history, of which they form so essential a part, mark the total contrariety between them and all pretended miracles, the falsity of which never disturbs the train of those histories in which they are narrated. But either the whole of the history of the Israelites is false, or the accounts of the miracles which it records must be true. If that people passed through the sea, as the history testifies, it must have been by miracle. If they remained forty years in the wilderness, they must have been miraculously fed while there. All the events related in the history depend upon the truth of that public and long-continued miraculous agency, without which they could not have had place. These miracles were recorded at the time when they occurred, and are not only minutely detailed in a way that stamps their authenticity, but are constantly appealed to both in the acts of public government, in the legislation, and in the execution of the laws. Unless the people of Israel had seen and known them to be facts, they never could have been influenced by such appeals.

The whole train of miraculous interposition

from the beginning, before there was any written revelation, materially contributed to maintain the knowledge and worship of God in the world. To Israel, as separated from the other nations, it was essential to the circumstances in which they were placed. Nothing but that miraculous Providence under which they were placed could have retained them in obedience, subdued their incredulity, or impressed on their minds a conviction of the Divine origin and nature of that dispensation under which they were placed. But such has been the force of this impression, that all their subsequent trials and dispersions, and all their disappointments, occasioned by the errors they have embraced, have not effaced it to this day. At length, when the purposes intended by miraculous interpositions were accomplished, they became gradually less frequent, till the spirit of prophecy was withdrawn, when they seem to have ceased altogether, not to appear again in Israel till they were renewed by the Messiah Himself, in a way better adapted to the genius of that more spiritual dispensation which He introduced, as well as more illustrative of the beneficent nature of the Divine mission of Him who came not to condemn the world, but to save it, but in a way equally beyond the utmost stretch of human power. *Haldane.*

The Bible is the Book of Miracles. Men sometimes sadly turn away from the great Book because inspiration is upon every page, and miracle pervades the activity which fills it from end to end. But believing souls rejoice in the great Bible because it deals with the eternal as well as with the present, with the infinite as well as with the finite, because it deals with man, who is the child of God. Only then shall the soul of man rest content in the great Bible, when in the new nature that has come to him the supernatural becomes his home. *P. Brooks.*

#### THE LAW AND THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

The historical books of the Old Testament contain such references, direct and indirect, to the *Pentateuch history and codes in their united form as the Torah (Law) mediated by Moses*, that we are fully justified in the circumstances in inferring, what these histories would plainly have us infer, that they all and severally belong to the Mosaic period. In the Books of Kings, the law of the land, precedent, what is sanctioned in distinction from what is often in vogue is everywhere represented as something that has come down from the fathers. In a surprising number of instances it is definitely

connected by name with Moses and with the institutions of Moses (1 K. 2 : 3 ; 8 : 9, 53, 56 ; 2 K. 14 : 6 ; 28 : 4, 6 ; 21 : 8 ; 23 : 25). Of Jeroboam it is said that he purposely transgressed the law respecting the feast of the seventh month, the Feast of Tabernacles (1 K. 12 : 32). And of Jehu that he took "no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel" (2 K. 10 : 31). In 2 K. 8 : 3, during the famine in Samaria, we find a company of lepers treated just as the Levitical statutes enjoin, in their exclusion from the camp (Lev. 13 : 46 ; Num. 5 : 3).

Other passages represent as something known to every one the hour of morning and evening sacrifice (1 K. 18 : 29 ; 2 K. 3 : 20) ; the law of the trespass-offering and sin-offering (2 K. 12 : 17), and that of the Sabbath (2 K. 4 : 23 ; cf. 11 : 5 f.). In 2 K. 14 : 6, Amaziah is declared to have acted in a certain matter according to that which was "written in the book of the law of Moses," the code of Deuteronomy being obviously referred to (Deut. 24 : 16). A few chapters later we are informed concerning the mixed peoples whom the king of Assyria transplanted to the northern kingdom, that they did not "after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob, whom He named Israel ; with whom the Lord had made a covenant and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods . . . but the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. . . . And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment which He wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore ; and ye shall not fear other gods" (2 K. 17 : 34-37 ; cf. Deut. 13 : 4, 36).

Whence came Elijah the Tishbite? and Obadiah and Joel, Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Micah? Unlike in natural gifts and training, they were yet impelled by one spirit ; uttered really but one message. Prophets of two fiercely rival kingdoms, they never waver in their loyalty to one invariable standard and to one King. It was Amos of Judah who, while tending his flocks in Tekoa, heard the call of God, and hurried to confront the haughty king of Israel and his false priests at Bethel. It was Elijah of Israel who won from the people of Judah such love and reverence that, to this day, in certain ceremonies, their descendants still set for him a chair as an invisible guest. What gave to these men this unity of spirit, this fiery zeal, this mysterious power over kings and people? What was it that took away all sense of fear in the discharge of duty? Whence that idea of solemn, imperative duty? It was the Mosaic law given amid the awful sanctions

of Mount Sinai, that was at once their bond and inspiration ; that ruled them and heartened them. They severally make direct and unmistakable allusions to it, or its essential historic setting. All their utterances are based on such a presupposition. They recognize a covenant made with God through Mosaic mediation. That covenant had not been kept. Their whole activity proclaims a perverse trend of thought and conduct against which they relentlessly fight, one and all. Founders of a religion they were not, and could not be, men like these, without a sign of collusion ; but mighty reformers they were, who set their faces like a flint against a prevailing degeneracy and lapse of the people whom God had chosen for His own. *E. C. Bissell.*

We have no record of any period in the history of Israel subsequent to the occupation of Canaan, at which the Law was not known ; and as far as the evidence of the records that we have is available, it clearly witnesses to the authority and influence of the Law from the very first. Whether or not this evidence is accepted historically, it is certain that there is no one section or era of Hebrew literature, whether it be the Prophets, Psalms, or history, which is free from the traces of an influence which can only be referred to the Law recognized as an authoritative code of Divine obligation and origin. The entire literature of the Old Testament, unless it is necessary to except such books as Job and Canticles, is penetrated and permeated with the influence of the Law. It is the one foundation underlying the whole. We come upon traces of it wherever we search. And it is this fact which gives to the several and widely different component elements of the literature a bond of cohesion and a substantive and substantial unity such as we can discover in no other literature whatever. It is, moreover, a unity which is entirely independent of the individual will of the various writers. It is a phenomenon which arises out of the fact that each separate writer was a member of a nation of whose existence one of the most marked features was the possession of the Law, and which was created and bound together by nothing so much as by it, and by the traditions enshrined in it.

From these books of Kings there is not only evidence of the existence of the Tabernacle, which was superseded by the Temple, but there is continual implication of a positive and external Law, which the nation and its kings were ever violating. This Law is mentioned explicitly in 2 K. 23 : 24, 25, and is called the Law of

Moses. Some critics have attempted to prove that the finding of the book of the Law here mentioned is the earliest indication of its existence, and that this incident does actually disguise its origin. But the theory is really too monstrous and visionary to be entertained. It is manifest that the writer of the Kings did not himself regard the discovery of Hilkiah as the origin of the Law, because in 2 K. 18 : 4, 6, 12, he traces the captivity of the ten tribes to their forgetfulness of the Law of Moses, and mentions the destruction by Hezekiah of the brazen serpent that Moses had made. It is impossible to suppose he invented or inserted the narrative of this incident to give credit to the newly discovered law of Moses, or to the copy of it which was afterward found in the Temple. There was unquestionably a brazen serpent destroyed by Hezekiah, and, rightly or wrongly, this was believed to be identical with that made by Moses in the wilderness. I say rightly or wrongly, for it matters not. What is really important is the fact that toward the end of the eighth century before Christ there was in the national memory a clear recollection of the incident recorded only at Num. 21 : 6, and a supposed relic of it existing. And this there is no reason to doubt. But, of course, if the brazen serpent destroyed by Hezekiah was the one made by Moses, the historic truth of that part of the Pentateuchal history is established ; but even if it was not, the supposed incident is shown to have been so old in the national memory, that a vicious accretion of superstitious observances had gathered around it ; and yet, as far as we know, there was nothing to keep alive this memory but the record in Numbers, and the existence of this particular brazen serpent. We have, then, in the testimony of the books of Kings, evidence to the existence, at least in part, of the Mosaic history long before the age of Hezekiah. But even before this time, on the testimony of the same books, we find Amaziah, in the ninth century before Christ, acting in accordance with the written precept of Deut. 24 : 16, in not slaying the children of those who had slain his father. There are, moreover, several indications in the books of Kings of verbal acquaintance on the part of the writer with the Law—*e.g.*, 2 K. 17 : 8-15 ; cf. Lev. 5 : 15, 18 ; 7 : 7 ; Num. 18 : 9 ; 1 K. 21 : 10 ; cf. Ex. 22 : 28, and Lev. 24 : 15, 16 ; 1 K. 19 : 10 ; cf. Num. 25 : 11, 13. The conduct of Elijah in 1 K. 18 : 40 is in literal accordance with Deut. 13 : 5 and 18 : 20. *S. Leathes.*

The references in the later Scriptures make us feel sure that the writers had before them

some such records as we possess in the Pentateuch. That at least is the impression which they are calculated to produce on the mind of any plain reader. Nor must we ever forget that the Historical Books give us only a very brief outline of Israel's course, and do not refer to feasts, laws, etc., except where the story makes it necessary. It is indeed only too true that the people did not keep the law. Their hearts were hard, and they were constantly relapsing ; but they were severely punished for their disobedience. There have been dark ages in Christendom as there were dark ages in Israel, and we must no more infer the non-existence of the Law of Moses through the one period than we can prove the non-existence of the Gospel of Christ in the other. The truth is that the theory of a late origin of these books creates far more difficulties than it solves. To most minds it would be impossible to conceive that the Book of Exodus was a late invention, when they reflect on the shameful episode concerning the golden calf—imbedded as it is in the heart of the Mosaic law. Nor can one understand the purpose of such an elaborate description of the ark of the Tabernacle, of the ritual and ceremonial connected therewith, and of the exact arrangements for moving from place to place, with full details and names of persons and localities, if these descriptions first saw daylight when the history of some of them (notably the Tabernacle) was already a story of the past. We ask ourselves whether there ever was a time, except during the wilderness period, in which the Mosaic and Leviticus legislation could possibly have been imposed on Israel ; and we ask in vain. We see no marks of a forger, and we see no reason for a forgery. On the contrary, each book bears testimony to the candor of the writer, and to his honesty of purpose ; and the real reason of the ritual is to be found in the New Testament. In a word, we know of no critical or linguistic arguments which can justify us in disintegrating the Pentateuch in the face of all the plain facts of the case as they stand before us in its vivid pages. *Girdlestone.*

According to the modern school of critics, the work of preparing the sacred books, of recasting the alleged history of Moses, and blending into the narrative the doctrines and prescriptions of ritualism, one central place of worship, and the distinctions of priests and Levites, was begun in the age of Josiah, and went on till the compilation of the historical books, some time after the Exile. According to this school, that period of renaissance or awakening must have

been a creative religious age, an age of discovery and production, of literary brilliancy in religion, outside of the writings of the prophets. For these writers ascribe to that age a most complicated and skillful series of literary creations, so adroitly managed and woven in with authentic facts, that they carried the whole nation over to the practice of the injunctions of the forgeries without questioning their genuineness. But we look in vain for the evidence of such a creative age. There is not a scintilla of historical proof of its existence. The only freshness that appears from the historical evidence coming down to us was in the prophets; and their whole aim and influence was to call the people up to something higher and more important than ritualism, to revive the moral and spiritual ideas of worship and of practical righteousness, which had already been too much covered up and lost sight of by the popular ceremonial. The only creative power of the age of which there is any trace was directed against the very end for which our critics suppose the age was ripe.

Moreover, they are involved in another difficulty. By discarding the accounts in the historical books detailing the practice of the ceremonial in the earlier times and holding that it sprang up under the influence of the prophets, they have this strange phenomenon on their hands: the introduction among a historical people of a revolutionary ritualism, not only with no record of its introduction, and in an age showing no signs of invention or creation apart from the prophets whose influence was antagonistic, but with no recorded historical preparations for it. Historically uncaused and unannounced, it sprang into such instant dazzling and bewildering power as to send its glamour back over the past and cause a new history of the preceding times to be written, in which it should have a seeming of the gravity and dignity of hoary age, and this is done in the name of historical criticism by those who think that sacred history is an orderly and natural flow of events, and is to be explained on rational principles. *J. E. Dwinell.*

#### *In Recapitulation and Conclusion.*

We recognize the fact that the Old Testament, as we now have it, is to all intents and purposes the same as it was in the time of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He stamps it as a whole with His authority, constantly appealing to it and quoting it as "the Scriptures" and "the Word of God." We trace these Scriptures back from the time of Christ to that

of Nehemiah (B.C. 400), in whose age the canon of the Old Testament seems to have been closed; and we see sufficient reason for believing that the "Library" of Jewish religious books was the same then as now, though doubtless the sacred text suffered much in the course of transcription between the age of Nehemiah and the period when it was issued in its present condition by the Jewish scribes of Tiberias, circ. 500 A.D. We recognize nine literary characteristics of the Old Testament which would equally justify a Jew of B.C. 400 or a Christian of A.D. 1900 in believing that the books which make up this Sacred Library are genuine and trustworthy. We see that the numerous casual references to external history contained in these books may be illustrated and confirmed from other sources, and this fact coupled with the plain proofs of the writers' honesty inclines us to accept the whole of their historical records as veracious, unless very strong proofs are forthcoming to the contrary. We observe that the prophetic writings were not only predictive, but also historic and hortative, bearing the same relation to the history that the Epistles in the New Testament do to the Acts—confirming and being confirmed—and that the historical element in these writings gives great literary weight to the predictive element. We then pass to the question of the age and compilation of certain books. After considering the general characteristics of the Hebrew language and the unity of theological diction which exists beneath the diversity of style in the sacred writers, noting also the fact that we have no contemporary Hebrew literature by which to test the age of each book, we are led to the conclusion that there were not sufficient grounds for bringing any of the books down from their professed dates, or for dividing up among several authors books which were professedly issued or authorized by one person. This conclusion justifies us in adhering to the Mosaic origin of the four last books of the Pentateuch—Genesis being in substance pre-Mosaic—and it encourages us to uphold the literary integrity of such books as Isaiah, Daniel and Zechariah, unless the evidence of their being compilations is demonstrative.

What shall we say to these things? We invite every reader to ponder over them, and we urge every critic to give them full and fair weight. There are many things we do not know about the compilation and dates and contents of the Old Testament, but there is much that we do know. Mistakes have been made by ancient copyists; notes and interpolations

may have found their way into the text in early times ; doubts may exist as to the age and authorship of some books ; we may be uncertain as to the historic foreground or occasion of many a psalm and prophecy ; and numerous linguistic questions will be battled over till the end of time ; but, in spite of all these things, we are manifestly on safe literary ground in taking the Old Testament as it stands, and in using it as Christ and His apostles used it.

These venerable books have been dragged before the court of modern criticism, but they need not be ashamed ; they can stand the full glare of linguistic and literary daylight. They share the fate of the Christian confessors of old time ; and they share their triumph. They testify to Christ, and Christ testifies to them. They bear the mark of God in their histories, their hymns, their predictions. Man is the writer, using human language, human modes of thought, and often even secular materials ; but God is the Inspirer, and these blessed writings are His lesson books, leading men to feel their need of salvation, keeping up in their hearts from generation to generation a spirit of expectancy, and enabling them to recognize the crucified and risen Jesus as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. *R. B. Girdlestone. (Age and Trustworthiness of the Old Testament Scriptures.)*

Let any set of men combine to write such a book as the Bible. Let their plan be laid so as to extend through a period of fifteen hundred years. Let those who shall first enter upon the work obtain others to succeed them during that space of time. Let them write history, poetry, theology, and prophecies concerning the state of the world. Let them at length procure some one to come forward in whom all that they have written shall find its accomplishment. Let him be born in the place they had foretold, of the family they had singled out, at the exact period they had predicted. Let him be exhibited in the most critical situations, in the midst of enlightened, powerful, and determined adversaries, while they still uphold him as perfect, and defy his enemies to prove the contrary. Let his own death be a part of their plan, which he himself shall foretell. Let a number of persons arise immediately afterward to carry forward the design, charge the government under which he suffered as his murderers, affirm that he is alive, and has given them convincing evidence that he will reward them in a future world. Let these men support their doctrines by an appeal to miracles

openly performed before enemies armed with civil power ; and let them adhere to their testimony at the expense of life, and all things dear in this world. Let them promulgate a new religion and code of laws, completely subversive of every existing religion on earth, and directly opposed to the indulgence of the strongest propensities of the human heart. Let this religion, by the force of its own evidence, win its way through the world, overthrow every opposing system, extend its triumphs, and finally establish itself in the most civilized nations, in spite of the most learned, the most determined, and the most powerful adversaries ; and let the character of the leader, as set forward by his associates, be thus vindicated as "the light of the nations." Who does not see the total impracticability, the absolute absurdity of such an attempt? As soon might men of understanding be induced to undertake to climb up to the stars, as to propose to themselves such a scheme ; yet all that has been thus supposed has been accomplished in Jesus Christ. *Haldane.*

#### WITNESS OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS TO OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY.

As the countries with which Israel had mainly to do were Chaldea, Egypt, Syria, Assyria, the later Chaldean Empire, and finally Persia, it becomes possible to compare the numerous though somewhat casual statements concerning these nations, which the Old Testament contains, with the inscriptions on rock and clay, in palace and temple, which have been brought to light in the course of this century. If these secular references are in the main proved to be accurate and historical, and not mythical, then the trustworthiness of the writers is so far established thereby ; and if they are trustworthy when dealing with things external, there is equal reason to trust them when they relate the internal history of their own nation. What, then, is the verdict of historical students on this point? It is unanimous that the references to external history in the Old Testament are trustworthy.

Perhaps the most striking testimony is to be obtained from the writings of Dr. Schrader, the Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Berlin. Dr. Schrader is what the ordinary English student would call "free" in his ideas about the inspiration and compilation of the sacred books, but this makes his testimony all the more valuable. His method is to follow straight through the Old Testament, noting every verse and sometimes every word

which can be illustrated by a wide and careful study of the cuneiform inscriptions. The result is that whether our attention is directed to the pre-Mosaic period, which includes the narrative of the Creation, the Deluge, Babel, the dispersion, and the invasion of the cities of the plain, or whether we are studying the later histories, we find illustrations of the historical value of the sacred narratives at every turn. *Girdlestone.*

The coincidences between the sacred record and the profane during the period from the revolt to the Captivity include notices of almost every foreign monarch mentioned in the course of the (sacred) narrative—of Shishak, Zerah, Ben-hadad, Hazael, Meshah, Rezin, Pul, Tiglath-pileser, Shalmanezzer, So, Sargon, Sennacherib, Tirhakah, Merodach Baladan, Esarhad-don, Necho, Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-Merodach, and Apries—and of the Jewish or Israelite kings, Omri, Ahab, Jehu, Ahaziah, Menahem, Pekah, Ahaz, Hoshea, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. All these monarchs occur in profane history in the order and at or near the time which the sacred narrative assigns to them. The synchronisms which that narrative supplies are borne out wherever there is any further evidence on the subject. The general condition of the powers which came into contact with the Jews is rightly described; and the fluctuations which they experience, their alternations of glory and depression, are correctly given. No discrepancy occurs between the sacred and the profane throughout the entire period, excepting here and there a chronological one. And these chronological discrepancies are in no case serious. G. R.

For more than fifty years the historical credibility of the Old Testament Scriptures has been assailed on the ground that the narratives contained in it are not contemporaneous with the events they profess to record, because they represent an incredible amount of civilization as existing in the ancient Eastern world, and are inconsistent with the accounts of classical writers, and because writing was little known or practised by the Jews at so early a period. The same half century, however, which has witnessed these assaults on the Old Testament has also witnessed the discovery and decipherment of monuments which belong to Old Testament times. At the very moment when the assailants of Scripture had adopted new methods of attack which could no longer be met by the old modes of defence, God was raising up unexpected testimonies to the truth of biblical history. The ancient civilizations of Egypt, of

Babylonia, and of Assyria now lie outspread before us as fully and clearly as the civilization of Imperial Rome. Sennacherib and Tiglath-pileser, Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, tell us in their own words the story of the deeds in which they themselves took part; and we can trace the very forms of the letters in which Isaiah and Jeremiah recorded their prophecies. The discoveries of the Moabite Stone and the Siloam Inscription have shown that writing was known and practised in Judah at the time to which the larger part of the Old Testament Scriptures professes to belong. The Moabite Stone was a monument erected by Meshah, the contemporary of Ahab, who is called "a sheepmaster" in 2 K. 8:4. (See Sec. 7.) The chief interest attaching to the inscription in our eyes lies, perhaps, in the language and characters in which it is written. The language is almost exactly the same as that of the Old Testament, and shows that the dialect of Moab differed much less from Hebrew than does one English dialect from another. The very phrases recur which the Old Testament has made familiar to us, and at times we might fancy that we were listening to a chapter of the Bible. The characters, too, in which the text is written belong to a form of the Phœnician alphabet which must have resembled very closely that used by the Jews. We may thus see in them the mode of writing employed by the earlier prophets, and correct by their means the corrupt readings which the carelessness of copyists has allowed to creep into the sacred text.

Since the discovery of the Moabite Stone, another early inscription has been found in Jerusalem itself, which shows us precisely how the books of the Old Testament, which were composed between the time of David and the Babylonian Captivity, must have been originally written. This is the Siloam Inscription, engraved in the rock-cut tunnel which conveys the water of the Virgin's Spring—the only natural spring in or about Jerusalem—to the pool of Siloam. Its strange position in a dark underground conduit, through which the water was perpetually flowing, caused it to remain unnoticed until a few years ago. The exact date at which the tunnel was executed is disputed, since while there are several reasons which would make us assign it to the age of Solomon, there are others which have led the majority of scholars to place it in the reign of Hezekiah. In this case it will be the conduit made by Hezekiah which is mentioned in 2 K. 20:20 and 2 Chron. 32:30. Now the forms of the letters used in the inscription make it



quite clear that the engraver was accustomed to write on parchment or papyrus, and not on stone. They are rounded and not angular like the characters on the Moabite Stone. It is plain, therefore, that the alphabet employed in Judah was that of a people who were in the habit of writing and reading *books*.

What we now know about the history of writing in the East not only makes it possible that the biblical books were written at the time to which tradition assigns them, but makes it probable that they were. It is not likely that the Israelites would have abstained from composing books when they were acquainted with the art of writing, and when the nations by whom they were surrounded had long been in the possession of libraries. And that the biblical books actually belong to the time to which tradition assigns them is evidenced by the confirmation their contents have received from the decipherment of the Egyptian and Assyrian monuments. The accuracy they display in small points is only explicable on the hypothesis that the histories contained in them were related by contemporaries. While, on the one side, the progress of modern discovery has tended to destroy the credit once attached to the works of Alexandrine Jews or Greek compilers, it has, on the other side, confirmed and verified, illustrated and explained, the statements and allusions in the historical and prophetic books of Holy Writ. The one are shown to belong to a later age than that of which they profess to give an account, the other to be contemporaneous with the events which they record. We may turn to them with increased confidence and faith; confidence in the historical picture they set before our eyes, and faith in the Divine message which they were commissioned to deliver.

To sum up. The witness of ancient monuments to the Old Testament Scriptures is of a twofold nature. It is positive, inasmuch as it proves that they are in agreement with actual facts; and negative, inasmuch as it shows how far this is from being the case with documents which lay claim to the same amount of credibility, and deal with the same subject-matter, but which really belong to a later age. The witness is therefore complete. Difficulties may still exist here and there, since as long as our knowledge is imperfect, there are things which cannot be satisfactorily explained; but difficulties enough have been already cleared away, confirmations sufficient of the truth of the biblical record have been produced, to banish such doubts as may have found place in our minds,

and to inspire us with a calm confidence that with the increase of knowledge and the discovery of fresh monuments the difficulties which still remain will be diminished, and the great body of verifying facts continually enlarged. The critical objections to the truth of the Old Testament once drawn from the armory of Greek and Latin writers can never be urged again; they have been met and overthrown once for all. The answers to them have come from papyrus and clay and stone, from the tombs of ancient Egypt, from the mounds of Babylonia, and from the ruined palaces of the Assyrian kings. These long-buried witnesses have been disinterred to cry out against the assailants of our faith, the long-forgotten empires of the ancient East have arisen out of the grave of centuries to testify to the truth of "the oracles of God." *Sayce*.

Looking back for less than forty years, it requires no small effort to grasp the vast advance which has been made in a single generation in the confirmation and illustration of Old Testament history from external sources. The sepulchres of Egypt have been ransacked, the mounds of Assyria and Babylonia have been excavated, the hills and rivers of Palestine have been searched, and the result is that there is scarcely a single incident, wherever the sacred narrative impinges on the history or transactions of neighboring nations, in which the minute accuracy of the biblical record is not established. . . . The historic accuracy of the Old Testament from Abraham downward is now all but established in every minute detail from contemporary records and evidence; and it is harder than ever to untwine the woof of its miracles from the warp of its history. One theory, research—whether in Mesopotamia, Syria, Arabia or Egypt—renders more untenable every day—viz., that which would resolve the individual man and events of early sacred history into myths and legends. Everywhere the stones cry out. Each fresh explanation attests or illustrates an incident the more confirmatory, often, from its very triviality, like that of the platform before the Palace of Tahpanhes. The Divine reproach on the rejecters of Christ becomes year by year more scathing: "If ye believe not *Moses'* writings, how shall ye believe *My* words?" *Tristram*.

In confirmation of the scriptural account of the origin and growth of early civilization, we may refer to the daily increasing mass of translated Assyrian and Chaldean documents, in which the long list of names, once peculiar to the Scripture, recur as familiarly as household

words ; or to the Moabite Stone recovered in so romantic a way, which tells so freely the story of " Mesha, king of Moab," and interprets together the Hebrew and Phœnician, as the Rosetta Stone had done the Greek and Egyptian, and the Behistun Inscription, the Persian, Assyrian and Babylonian ; or to the testimony from the comparative study of language, ethnology, ethnography, etc. In this connection we note :

(1) The preservation of these unique and perishable memorials from so great antiquity and in so improbable ways, while the nearer, more abundant and multiplied copies of the Greek and Latin classics have almost wholly perished ; (2) their hiding through so many centuries, entombed in rubbish or sealed up in occult languages, making their authority, when revealed, indisputable ; (3) their almost simultaneous issuance, and the strangely coincident appearance of the several undreamed-of keys for their interpretation ; (4) the exact response of the testimony so evoked to the antiquity and genuineness of the Scripture documents ; (5) the abundant points of contact and consequently of test between the new data and the Scripture, because of the circumstantiality of each ; (6) and the prescient minuteness of the Scripture in name, date and circumstance avowedly for this end. Surely " this also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." *J. B. Thomas.*

For twenty-five years the peculiar phase of anti-supernatural criticism which in this country is called " Higher Criticism " has busied itself with discovering in the Old Testament contradictory narratives, statements, dates and, above all and in all, a wretched, incomprehensible editing of the whole. Having for twenty-five years followed this criticism in all its works, I can speak for myself and say that I do not see one discrepancy where Kuenen, Wellhausen, Budde, Cornill, and their followers see a hundred contradictions, and I turn from their works to the Bible as one turns from a dark Indian temple, with its hideous forms of man-made gods, to the fair light of the Sun in God's temple of the sky. These writers declare that they have proved the historical parts of the Bible to be no history at all. But they have proved it only to those who would exclude the supernatural. They assert that the early history of the Bible is fable and legend, because man is there represented as having a high ideal of God and a religious sense that belongs only to later ages. But their fellow-professors tell us that early man, as he is shown by his monuments in Egypt and Asia, had a high ideal of God, of

morals, and an elaborate scheme of religion. This criticism dogmatically states that the Israelites, before David's time, could not write, and, therefore, composed no books, kept no records before that time, B.C. 1000. Egyptology and Assyriology give us myriad proofs that as soon as man appears on monuments, earlier than B.C. 3000, it is with the hand of a master in all written characters, and that the Semites, of whom the Hebrews were a part, from the earliest times held in their trained hands all the great roads of the world's commerce. The Jew has never, except in this criticism, been accounted the dunce of the nations.

The history of this school of criticism brings before us many facts which would never be supposed unless proved by so many witnesses. But among all these facts there is none more astounding than that, while professing to be above all things historical and to utter the voice of history, it has persistently shut its eyes from seeing, its ears from hearing, and its pages from telling, the history with which it is most concerned. By the side of these Old Testament professors in their own universities, there have been for decades professors of Egyptology and Assyriology. These sciences are represented by men as learned and as numerous as the Protestant professors of Old Testament literature in Germany and England, who do not number sixty, all told. They have established stately reviews in French, German, and English. The literature of these sciences is greater than that of this Old Testament criticism, as the texts on which they work are far greater than all the Old Testament and the Greek and Latin classics combined. The press during most of this century has poured forth works of the highest class of scholarship in these sciences. These works treat of extra-biblical history parallel with the Old Testament. They treat of the history of these languages, of religion, education, civilization, ethics, law, poetry, architecture, archæology. Now we should suppose that this criticism which professes to be historical would take all this as, at least, one of the factors of its problem. But its volumes will be searched in vain for the first evidence of any acquaintance with this most learned and scientific help to the understanding of the Old Testament. From these volumes one would never imagine the existence of this vast sphere of knowledge, which has revolutionized the whole idea of ancient history, and gives us the environment of Palestine from at least a thousand years before Moses to the time of Christ.

For seventy years the monuments of Egypt, and for fifty years the monuments of Babylonia and Assyria, have been studied by a host of scholars, the peers of any others the world has known. M. Menant, of France, says that the texts already discovered would fill five hundred octavo volumes—a larger amount than all the Greek and Latin classics. In Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Leyden, Upsala, and elsewhere, professorships of Egyptology and Assyriology have been long established. The permanent literature of these subjects, the sober, scientific works of these scholars issued in the past fifty years, would make a library by themselves. Wherever sound philological and historical study is honored, there the names of the great Egyptian and Assyrian scholars will be placed high in the list of those who have benefited their fellows. The immense value of this work arises from the well-nigh numberless monuments discovered. These scholars give us the monuments and their story, so that the learner can compare the story with its source. If now we can ascertain the points on which these Egyptian and Assyrian scholars—French, English, German, Dutch, Italian, Swedish, Russian—are unanimously agreed, we may be sure there is good foundation for those points; and it is also certain that those points will represent the most scientific historical teaching of the present day concerning early man. Beyond the monuments all is, must be, mere speculation. The monuments form the horizon of all extra-biblical knowledge of early man. On the following four points there is unanimous agreement:

1. That with the earliest monuments man appears before us with language fully formed, and elaborate written characters responding to all his needs. Never afterward in Babylonia or Egypt are the signs of language more beautifully shaped and chiselled than on the numerous diorite statues of Tello, or on the granite and limestone of the tablet of Senoferu, of the pyramids of Unas, Pepi, Mirinri, of the tomb of Ti. The long and many inscriptions of Tello and of the pyramids show us the language capable of expressing all religious thought, rich in the terms of settled, civilized, refined life, abundant in geographical names, and speaking of gold, iron, bronze, and precious woods and minerals, as of common possessions. 2. The earliest monuments show us the religions of Babylonia and Egypt already fully formed; their main fundamental doctrines remaining the same throughout the existence of their peoples, though with the centuries there

were many changes in non-fundamental points. Up to 1880 there were many attempts to trace the evolution of the religion of Egypt; but by the opening of the inscribed pyramids in 1881 all historical ground was taken from these speculations—for these inscriptions display all the main doctrines of the Egyptian religion fully elaborated. So that it is now agreed on all hands by the masters of these sciences that one must go behind all monuments, all historic proof, if he would attempt to trace the beginnings of Egyptian or Babylonian religion. 3. The art of Tello in Babylonia and of the pyramid times in Egypt was the highest art ever reached in these lands; their earliest art was their best. At this earliest period the numerous extant remains of their art show a mastery of all details, an ease and grace of handling, a simplicity and truth to nature, a refinement of conception, and a deftness in execution never attained again in the later centuries of these peoples. The statues of Tello, the intaglios of early Chaldea, the statues and bas-reliefs of early Egypt, the pyramids, enormous in mass, yet with exquisitely finished, inscribed, painted inner passages and chambers; the tomb of Ti at Sakkarah, with its wealth of sharp-cut letters, and more abundant bas-reliefs of all the forms of most ancient home life, and many other tombs—all tell the same story, that man at this era had reached the acme of the art of his people. 4. Language and religion fully formed, and art at its best, prove the fourth point—that at the earliest age of man, shown by the monuments, a very high degree of civilization reigned in Babylonia and Egypt, and both these lands were intimately acquainted and in commercial exchange with the Sinaitic Peninsula and the Syrian-Phœnician coast.

If these results of Egyptology and Assyriology are true, as these scholars believe, then there is far greater reason for placing the composition of the Pentateuch in the classic age than in the age of the decline and abasement of Western Asiatic and Egyptian literature. Both Driver and Cornill imagine a state of society and religion before the age of David that is in blank contradiction to the facts shown by the monuments. Without this purely imaginary society and religion their theory could have no basis. If the Pentateuch written in the most classic Hebrew, if the Psalms and Prophets, the Old Testament as we have it, was to a large extent written, edited, and issued only from 650 to 160 B.C., then the miracle of its appearance is still greater than at earlier dates, for the decadence of all Western Asiatic and Egyptian

literature was in full course. The literary sceptre had long passed from Asiatic to Greek hands. And if by all the analogies of environment there is no reason why the Pentateuch should not have been composed 1400 B.C., there is also no reason why the principal actor in the history should not have been its historian. When we have a document claiming to narrate contemporary history by an apparent or asserted author, we are told by those who write on historical method that it must be tested by the following questions: 1. Was the apparent author a contemporary? 2. Was he a participant or eye-witness of the events? 3. What was the author's ability to observe and conceive, his education, his understanding of the matters related, his position in life, the theme and form of his narratives, his tendency and party? 4. Does the author show in his writings and in his acts that he prefers truth above all things? 5. Are there any reasons why he should deceive? Now no "concision" of the Pentateuch can efface from it the noble character of Moses. If, then, the Pentateuch is in a fitting literary environment only in the age of Moses, are not all these questions best answered by the character of Moses, by his education, understanding, position in life, and relation to the events? Are there any reasons conceivable why he should deceive? *H. Osgood.*

The recent wonderful discovery at Tell-el-Amarna of scores and scores of tablets covered with cuneiform inscriptions, shows that fifteen hundred years before Christ there was an active literary movement in Western Asia and Egypt, and that extensive correspondence was carried on throughout the whole region. Professor Sayce has made a special study of these tablets, and of their wonderful tale he makes detailed mention in his now famous address on the subject before the Victoria Institute of London. According to his statements we learn that in the fifteenth century before Christ—a century before the Exodus—active literary intercourse was carried on throughout the civilized world of Western Asia, between Babylonia and Egypt, and the smaller states of Palestine, of Syria, of Mesopotamia, and even of Eastern Cappadocia. And this intercourse was carried on by means of the Babylonian language and in the complicated Babylonian script. It implies that all over the civilized East there were libraries and schools where the Babylonian language and literature were taught and learned. Babylonian was in fact as much the language of diplomacy and cultivated society as French has been in modern times, with

the difference that the cuneiform syllabary required years of hard labor to acquire. The existence of a literature at such an extremely early period has received a wonderful confirmation in the inscriptions found by Dr. Edward Glazer last year in Southern Arabia. He gathered 1081 of these tablets, and they are revealing a new world of biblical history. It appears that as early as almost two thousand years before Christ there was a kingdom established under Jewish influence in Southern Arabia, and that this and its Christian successors flourished there until the Mohammedan crusade. The Minæo-Sabæan kingdoms have now stepped upon the stage of history. The visit of the Queen of Sheba need now no longer cause any astonishment, as one of the inscriptions mentions the city of Gaza. Throughout this vast region from Southern Arabia to the Mediterranean there flourished at this early period an alphabetic method of writing, being derived from the Phœnician alphabet. The belief that in the pre-Mohammedan times this was a country of illiterate nomads must now be abandoned. Dr. Hommel, of Munich, has discovered that some of these inscriptions bear the date of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries before our era.

The bearing of these discoveries on biblical discussions are apparent. For decades it has been the favorite view of neological critics that the traditional views of an early literature in Israel, dating back to the days of Moses, must be given up for want of evidence. It was confidently maintained that no records of the Old Testament before the times of David were historically reliable because there were no written records before that date. Now within almost the immediate present is discovered a wealth of evidence going to prove beyond the shadow of any and every doubt that already between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries before Christ, in the very days of the patriarchs, and even before, there existed an active literary movement throughout the whole length and breadth of the land in which Israel moved and lived. If all the nations of Western Asia and Northeastern Africa, and even all the tribes with whom Israel was ethnologically related, were at that time in possession of an alphabet and of a literature, then surely the beginnings of literature in Israel too must be set down to this date. The gain thus made for conservative biblical research is immense, and the chagrin of destructive criticism in seeing its fantastic structure of what the early history of God's people ought to have been according to their

hypotheses undermined and overthrown, is not hard to understand. The data thus furnished by the tiles of Egypt and the rocks of Arabia are cold facts before which subjective rationalizing must hush.

Another of the most gratifying and remarkable finds in this line within the last half dozen years has been the actual re-discovery of a once powerful Oriental and biblical people, of whom nearly all traces had been lost in secular literature, and the reference to whom by the Bible was often made the base of a charge of unhistorical character. The nation in question are the Hittites. Abraham bought his family burial-place from Ephron the Hittite; Esau married two wives that were Hittites. They are constantly mentioned as among the powerful tribes that inhabited Canaan before the conquest by Joshua. Even as late as the date of 1 K. 10 : 29 and 2 Chron. 1 : 17, they are a mighty nation. Recent discoveries in Asia Minor, Egypt and Babylonia have brought to light evidences in abundance that this people not only existed as described in the Scriptures, but that they were a most important factor in the ups and downs of the politics of Asia Minor. As early as ten years ago, Dr. Schliemann found on the site of ancient Troy curious monuments and vases which were neither Greek nor Egyptian. These are now seen to be the Hittites. Lately some hieroglyphics have been deciphered which state that after the expulsion of the mysterious shepherd kings, King Thotmes III., the greatest warrior of the Pharaohs, made fourteen campaigns to the northwest, and that his chief opponents were the Hittites, whose southern capital was Kadesh, near Damascus. Similar accounts of later contests with the Hittites have also been discovered. Some recently found cuneiform inscriptions in the valley of the Euphrates show that the northern capital of the Hittites was Charcemish, the famous city on the western bank of the river not far from Babylon. It is now known that the Hittites were a strong nation as far back as the days of Sargon I., the great emperor of Western Asia, twenty-four hundred years before the Christian era.

But ancient Babylon and Nineveh have proved veritable storehouses for the Bible student. Literally tens of thousands of cuneiform inscriptions on brick and tile have been unearthed. A whole library has been discovered in the palace of Assurbanipal, covering all the departments of knowledge current among the Chaldeans. The literature of these inscriptions embrace poetry and prose, the former of epics—of which there are two—lyrics and

other kinds; the latter chiefly history, especially the records of military achievements. Of special interest, beside the historical documents running parallel with the records of the Bible, is the religious literature of this people. In one of the great epics, of which the biblical Nimrod is the hero, there are also found accounts of the creation and the flood which have a remarkable similarity to those of the Bible, both of which go further into details than do the scriptural descriptions; angelology and demonology are extensively developed; religious psalmody exists in great abundance, etc.

Although scholars have been laboring for twenty and more years on the decipherment of these inscriptions, the materials have accumulated on their hands more rapidly than they could be utilized, while much yet remains buried in the ruins of the East. In the British Museum there are yet thousands of tablets and cylinders awaiting the investigators. The gain from this study has been exceedingly great. The Book of Daniel is a notable example of this. Subjective criticism for a century had claimed that this book *could* not be authentic, but must be a product of the Maccabean struggle. Recent discoveries have shown that this historical background of Daniel demands just such a period as it claims for itself. The tendency of this whole field of research has been to confirm and strengthen the biblical records. Indeed, this is true of all modern Oriental research. Experience has shown that the more light science and investigation throw upon the Scriptures all the more these appear to be the truth and nothing but the truth. *Schodde.*

The historic East is giving up its dead, and the story of the ruins and remains of its most ancient civilization is even more deeply interesting and instructive for the biblical student than for the secular historian. In an altogether new sense the classical *Ex Oriente lux* is proving itself true. The recent finds and discoveries in Bible lands have put an altogether new face on many of the oldest phases of history, and pick and spade have been making valuable contributions to biblical archaeology. In the face of the facts unearthed in the last decade or two, the idea, current in many critical circles, that Abraham and his children and descendants, down to the Exodus, were a wholly rude and uncultured race, is demonstrably incorrect. It is now certain that in Babylonia, where the forefathers of the Hebrews lived for many years, the Semites who had emigrated into those districts had, at a very early age, appropriated and developed further the civilization

which the earliest inhabitants of Babylonia, the Summarians and Accadians, then already possessed. This immigration of Semites, the stock and family to which also the Hebrews belonged, began centuries before Terah, the father of Abraham, settled there, and Abraham himself lived there for seventy-five years. In fact, such was the state of civilization of these people that, as early as the twentieth century B.C. the Semitic crowded out of Babylonia the old Turanian Summeric tongue, and in turn became the language of the people, the court, and of literature, the old language being retained only as a dead tongue, by priests and savants. Such is the story now told us by the cuneiform inscriptions found in late years in the Euphrates and Tigris lands.

Just within recent months a new and unexpected turn has been given to this problem by the researches of the Assyriologist of Munich, Professor Fr. Hommel, who in an autograph volume has furnished data to show that even the oldest civilization of Egypt, which all along has been tacitly accepted as having been indigenous and self-developed, drew largely on Babylonia for its culture and religion. In this way the earliest homes of the ancestors of the Israelites are shown to have been the very original seats of the highest culture developed at that early age. In view of these data the naturalistic idea at the bottom of so much negative biblical criticism of the day, according to which the Hebrews were originally an exceedingly crude nomadic tribe, without law or letters, and only gradually acquiring the first elements of civilization, is inconsistent with the results of scholarly research. Hommel argues his proposition along four lines—viz., by a comparison of sacred places in Babylon and Egypt, then by placing side by side the mythologies of the two countries, and next their languages and writing, and to the satisfaction of many scholars has proved that the dependence of Egyptian culture on the Babylonian prehistoric times is a fact that can no longer be denied. *V. von Strauss und Torney.*

According to the researches of Dr. Schliemann there was neither a Stone Age nor a Metal Age in Greece and Asia Minor. In the finds at Troy, especially, there is the most striking evidence of devolution. Here, as well as at Mycenæ, the ornaments and implements discovered, even in the lowest strata, far from indicating a state of savagery and degradation, betoken one of high civilization. In the light of Schliemann's discoveries, not to speak of others pointing in the same direction, made in

Egypt, and among the ruins of Assyria and Babylonia, bearing on the condition of primitive man in the Orient, the conclusion seems to be inevitable that the modern evolution school is wrong—that the history of our race is not one of development, but one of degeneration. Thus, the story of the Fall, as recorded in Holy Writ, is corroborated by the declarations of the newest of sciences—prehistoric archæology. When examining some of the evidence presented by geologists in favor of the antiquity of man, one cannot help saying with Goethe, "The thing the most terrible to hear is the constantly reiterated assurance that geologists agree on a given point." In 1857, the famous Neanderthal skull was discovered near Düsseldorf. Professor Schaaffhausen adjudged it to be "the most ancient memorial of the early inhabitants of Europe." Professor Fuhbrott wrote a book on it, in which he declared the age of the relic to be from 200,000 to 300,000 years, but Dr. Mayer, of Bonn, after a critical examination of the "fossil," and the locality in which it was found, came to the conclusion that it was the skull of a Cossack killed in 1814! *J. A. Zahm.*

The fierce criticism to which the books of the Bible have been subjected since the beginning of the present century is but a reflection of a general spirit of scepticism which has rejected traditional beliefs in regard to ancient history and writings, and insisted on bringing them before the bar of the modern inductive method. It is not only the ancient history of Israel which has been relegated to the region of myth; the ancient histories of Greece and Rome have fared no better, and it has been obstinately maintained that the history of civilization begins with the age of Cyrus, and that literary documents in the true sense of the word were unknown before the closing days of the Jewish monarchy. There has been a tacit assumption that the nations of antiquity were practically illiterate, and that it is useless to search for grains of truth in the traditions of their earlier history which have come down to us.

The high water-mark of historical scepticism is represented in Greek history by Sir George Cox, in Roman history by Sir George Cornewall Lewis, in sacred history by Havet and Vernes. The reaction naturally came first in the case of Greek history. The excavations of Dr. Schliemann proved that the early history of Greece was not that mass of myths and fables which it has been the fashion to suppose it to be; that, on the contrary, the story of

Achaian power and culture was founded on fact, and that a race of kings once held sway in Mycenæ who were in contact with the civilizations of Egypt and Phœnicia. At first the scholars scoffed; but facts are stubborn things, and before his death Dr. Schliemann had the satisfaction of knowing that he had by means of the spade re-established the credit of a history which the higher criticism seemed to have demolished forever.

As the destructive criticism of the Old Testament had but followed in the wake of that of early Greek history, it was natural that it should share the fortunes of the latter. The discovery and decipherment of the monuments of Egypt, of Assyria, and of other Oriental lands, have done for the older records of the Bible what the discoveries of Dr. Schliemann have done for the early traditions of Greece. The historical fabric which the higher criticism had claimed to have destroyed is being reconstructed by the archaeologist and decipherer. We have come to know that much which had been pronounced impossible was not only possible, but true, and that the difficulties raised by the critic were really due to his own ignorance.

Of course we must not conclude that the

work of the "higher criticism" has been altogether barren of results. On the contrary, it has elucidated points which had previously been neglected, and has caused the text of the Old Testament to be minutely examined in a way which cannot but be helpful to the cause of truth. Doubtless there is a portion of its work which will prove to be a permanent acquisition of science. But it has been disfigured by a spirit of arrogance and scepticism, and a disposition to prefer the conclusions of the student in his library to the solid facts of archaeological research. The critic forgot that as long as the Old Testament and the history it embodied remained isolated and solitary, the last relic of a literature which seemed elsewhere to have perished, it was what the logicians would call a "single instance," and that from a "single instance" no generalizations of any scientific value can be drawn. To-day the case is different; the past has yielded up its dead, and the contemporaries of the writers and heroes of the Old Testament are speaking to us once more in living tones. And the witness they bear is clear and unmistakable to the antiquity of writing in the ancient world and the substantial accuracy of the historical statements of Holy Scripture. *Sayce.*

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## Section 2.

### THE BOOKS OF KINGS AND CHRONICLES.

#### THE BOOKS OF KINGS.

THE Book of Kings is probably the work of the prophet Jeremiah. This is the tradition of the Jews; and so many little coincidences are found between the acknowledged works of Jeremiah and this composition, that it is almost impossible to doubt that they proceeded from the same author. Jeremiah's authorship is indeed *especially* apparent in the later chapters, but as those chapters are the natural sequence of the earlier ones, and harmonize with them very remarkably in style and general character, the entire work must be ascribed to the same hand that wrote its last section. This unity of authorship must, however, be understood *with a difference*. The Book of Kings, like most histories which cover a considerable space of time, is in the main a compilation. Divine inspiration did not, in the case of the writers of Holy Scripture, su-

persede the use of the ordinary methods of obtaining knowledge. The author of Kings constantly refers his readers to authorities from whom they may obtain fuller particulars concerning the personages mentioned in his narrative than he himself places before them; and it can scarcely be doubted that he drew his knowledge of the past principally, if not wholly, from these authorities. He cites a "Book of the Acts of Solomon" (1 K. 11:41), a "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah," and a "Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel" (1 K. 14:19, 20)—works which must clearly have covered exactly the ground that he traverses; works which he evidently regards as authentic. It appears from the Books of Chronicles that it was among the regular duties of the prophets and seers, who succeeded one another without interruption from the commencement of the Jewish kingdom under Saul to the Cap-

tivity of Zedekiah, to compose histories of the kings with whom they were contemporary on a scale much larger than that in which their histories are delivered to us in the Old Testament. Samuel began, Nathan continued, and Gad finished a "Book of the Chronicles of King David" (1 Chron. 27:24; 29:29); Nathan, Abijah, and Iddo wrote accounts of the reign of Solomon (2 Chron. 9:29); Shemaiah and Iddo related the history of the reign of Rehoboam (12:15); Iddo recorded the history of Abijah, Rehoboam's son (13:22); Jehu, the son of Hanani, that of Jehoshaphat (20:34); Isaiah, that of Uzziah (26:22) and Hezekiah (32:32); Hosai, that of Manasseh (33:19).

The object proposed to himself by the author of Kings was the carrying on of the Israelitish history from the point to which he found it brought at the close of the Second Book of Samuel to his own time, in a compendious form, and in the spirit of the earlier sacred writers. He commences his work with the conjunction "and," thereby indicating that it has the character of a continuation. He then devotes his first section (1 K. 1:2:1-11) to the closing years of David, less, however, with the object of completing David's history, which he perhaps found completed in Samuel, than with that of introducing to us the person and history of Solomon, which was what he especially proposed to set before his readers in the first great division of his narrative. That narrative really consists of three main portions—1. A history of Solomon from his association by David to his death (1 K. 1-11). 2. A history of the parallel kingdoms of Israel and Judah, down to the extinction of the former (1 K. 12; 2 K. 17); and, 3. A history of the kingdom of Judah from the time of the downfall of the sister state to the final destruction of the Davidic monarchy by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (2 K. 18-25). The authenticity of the general narrative of Kings is scarcely questioned by any writer, ancient or modern. No one doubts that from the time of David the Jews were familiar with writing, and adopted the practice of keeping state records; nor is it questioned that, in the main, the writer of Kings honestly drew from this source. G. R.

The Jewish tradition which ascribes them to Jeremiah is borne out by the strongest internal evidence, in addition to that of the language. The last chapter, especially as compared with the last chapter of the Chronicles, bears distinct traces of having been written by one who did not go into captivity, but remained in Judæa after the destruction of the Temple. This suits

Jeremiah. The events singled out for mention in the concise narrative are precisely those of which he had personal knowledge, and in which he took special interest. The writer in Kings has nothing more to tell us concerning the Jews or Chaldees in the land of Judah, which exactly agrees with the hypothesis that he is Jeremiah, who we know was carried down to Egypt with the fugitives. In fact, the date of the writing and the position of the writer seem as clearly marked by the termination of the narrative at verse 26, as in the case of the Acts of the Apostles. But though the general unity and continuity of plan lead us to assign the whole history in a certain sense to one author, yet it must be borne in mind that the authorship of those parts of the history of which Jeremiah was not an eye-witness—that is, of all before the reign of Josiah—would have consisted merely in selecting, arranging, inserting the connecting phrases, and, when necessary, slightly modernizing the old histories which had been drawn up by contemporary prophets through the whole period of time. See, *e. g.*, 1 K. 13:32. For, as regards the sources of information, it may truly be said that we have the narrative of contemporary writers throughout. There was a regular series of state annals both for the kingdom of Judah and for that of Israel, which embraced the whole time comprehended in the Books of Kings, or at least to the end of the reign of Jehoiakim (2 K. 24:5). These annals are constantly cited by name as "the Book of the Acts of Solomon" (1 K. 11:41); and, after Solomon, "the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, or Israel"—*e. g.*, 1 K. 14:29, etc.; and it is manifest that the author of Kings had them both before him while he drew up his history, in which the reigns of the two kingdoms are harmonized, and these annals constantly appealed to. But in addition to these national annals, there were also extant, at the time that the Books of Kings were compiled, separate works of the several prophets who had lived in Judah and Israel. P. S.

A very simple theory of the origin of the Books of Kings which will account for all the existing phenomena, and which has some positive evidence in its favor, may be stated as follows: From the days of Solomon to the Exile there was produced in Israel and Judah a succession of writings by prophets, more or less historical in character. Public records were also kept. The Books of Kings were produced from these two sources, mainly by the simple process of copying such passages as the com-



piler found himself inspired to copy for the purpose, doubtless with just such changes and occasional comments as appear in the Book of Chronicles, in the passages there taken from Samuel and Kings. This hypothesis is consistent with the integrity of the book, and explains its diversities of style, its abrupt transitions, its occasional rough joinings of parts, and all the other like phenomena which occur. There is no need to suppose that the original documents had been previously edited into continuous histories before the compiler of Kings used them. There is no need to suppose that any part of the book has passed through the hands of successive editors or redactors since it was first compiled. It is possible that the work of compiling was done at two or three different periods. The post-classical character of the Hebrew of the last chapter suggests the probability that it, at least, is later than the rest, and therefore that the rest was completed before the burning of the Temple. Most of the difficulties in regard to the text in Kings may be naturally accounted for by the way in which the book was produced. A writer working in this way would use works of unequal literary merit, and might sometimes transcribe without change statements of fact that were ill written. Other passages, both in what he transcribed and in what he himself added, need the light of the omitted parts of the context, and are obscure for lack of it. In such circumstances one should not be hasty in asserting, from internal evidence merely, that an ancient text is corrupt and needs emendation.

At first thought the parallel passages in Chronicles seem to be of the nature of variant copies of those portions of the text, and to have weight against the opinion that the text has been handed down with verbal accuracy. But a close examination shows that most of these variations are either short abridgments, or modernizations, or insertions of particles, evidently made by the author of Chronicles for the sake of a more flowing narrative, or else are longer insertions of new matter, generally in Hebrew, that is decidedly of the later age; that is, that most of the differences are to be attributed to the author of Chronicles, and not to the copyists of either book.

The peculiarities of the construction of the book should not be forgotten in our inquiries as to its chronology. Nothing is more likely than that different writers should use numerals in different ways, or that these peculiarities should be conveyed by transcription into the

compiled work, thus giving it the appearance of being contradictory in its numerical statements. All the phenomena of the numbers given in the Books of Kings are readily explained in this way, without admitting even a single numeral to be mistaken. Those who account for them by supposing that the numbers are a later interpolation are obliged also to regard a large proportion of them as mistakes.  
*W. J. Beecher.*

*The purpose of the writer* in composing the Book of Kings evidently was to exhibit the bloom and decay of the kingdom of Israel, and to trace the influences which moulded its varying destiny. He represents the whole history, from first to last, as under the direct control of the religious government of Jehovah, the national God, and he proceeds on the fixed idea that the promise given to David of a sure house remained in force during all the vicissitudes of the divided kingdom, and was not even frustrated by the fall of the kingdom of Judah. His whole aim is to exhibit the course of events as so controlled by the Divine Hand that faithfulness to God ensured blessing, and unfaithfulness brought down His displeasure and led to national decline. Writing at a period when the influences, human and divine, which had moulded the history, had had time to show their developments, he holds these up to light in his pages, exhibiting at once what God had done for His people, and the manner in which they had requited His goodness. In the true spirit of prophecy he does not reprove the people for their neglect of outward ordinances nor insist on the ceremonial part of the law, but reproves them for forgetting the God that brought them out of the land of Egypt, for turning a deaf ear to the prophets, and for rejecting "His statutes and His covenant that He made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He testified against them" (2 K. 17: 15). In his brief, dry records of the doings and failings of the rulers of Israel and Judah, he has pointed out where the strength or weakness of a kingdom lies, and given us the most valuable lessons on political freedom. How many patriots and reformers, since his day, have been nerved to brave the fury of princes and do valiantly for the truth by the example of Old Testament prophets as set before them in these pages! And had the author of the Books of Kings done nothing more than this he had rendered incalculable service to the world. His views may not be wide, but he does not deviate from his main position that a state stands secure only when it is founded on God's

truth, and that it is preserved from danger only by His constant defence. He sees also, and the whole world has seen, that God had a special purpose in setting up the house of David at Jerusalem, and that His promise to that house did not fail of effect. The great empires of the East, with all their magnificence, have passed away and contributed but little to the world's good. The house of Omri perished and nearly involved the house of David in its fall; but the little kingdom of Judah, amid backslidings and shortcomings, was preserved till it was enabled to hand down to the world an enduring spiritual blessing. The fabric of an organized state held together till the seed of Divine truth had time to germinate and take deep root in the minds of those to whom it was revealed, and the decay of the outward state, and the failures of the best of human rulers, were the means by which these chosen ones were led to look for a kingdom which is not of this world. *J. Robertson.*

#### THE BOOKS OF KINGS IN MODERN CRITICISM.

At the present stage of discussion an Old Testament book is put under the critical microscope, not so much for its own sake as for the purpose of learning what it can contribute toward the solution of the central problem of the debate. The newer criticism of Moses and the prophets aims at an entirely new reconstruction of the traditional views of the Old Testament religion and its literary records. For centuries, in fact at all times, it has been considered virtually an axiom in the Christian church and among Christian scholars that the Old Testament is the record of the unfolding of God's plans for the restoration of sinful man; that Moses and the law stand at the head of the old dispensation, both chronologically and theologically—*i.e.*, that the law was the basis of the educational process by which Jehovah was training his own peculiar and chosen people; that prophecy, in so far as it found expression in literature, appeared later, and that its purpose was to assist in the work of the theocratic government of God in Israel; in other words, the Old Testament has been regarded as a revelation from God and as a history of God's revelation of Himself to Israel and to mankind, and as the narrative of the gradual growth and increase of revealed truth quantitatively and qualitatively through God's chosen messengers. The *summa summarum* of the Church's faith has been that the Old Testament was a revealed book, and the Old Testament religion was a revealed religion. This,

we are now told by the adherents of the Kuenen-Wellhausen school, is all a mistake. The religion of Israel differs in kind and essentially in no manner from the religions of the surrounding nations. It is simply one of many religions; only one of many ways in which the heart and thought of man have given expression to his religious needs and feelings. Israel's religion is not one resulting from a special revelation from a higher being, but a purely natural product. According to these views there is no need of a God, neither in explaining the conduct of Israel's history nor in order to understand the records of this history. Everything is purely the result of natural factors, and the result is a natural and human product.

The conservative criticism of the day maintains, and we are convinced with reason and right, that this book in all of its statements is historically reliable, based, as it itself claims to be, upon official and contemporary documents; while the defenders of the new views maintain that the bulk of the book may indeed be historically correct, that it has nevertheless been changed to suit a later condition of affairs, and things had been introduced that it did not originally contain; so that, if a fair criticism is to be practised, all these later changes, additions, etc., must be cut out, the book restored to its original character, and then be heard on the question under discussion. That in this critical amputation those members are cut off which militate against the favorite views of these scholars needs scarcely to be mentioned, and that this is done with a cruelty and lack of fairness not in harmony with a true exegesis of Holy Writ needs scarcely to be mentioned to those who are acquainted with the productions of this school. *Schodde.*

To conclude that there was no ceremonial prescribed before the time of Solomon, and no recognized code of law beyond the Book of the Covenant up to the time of Josiah, is not warranted by anything stated in the Books of Kings, nor, it may be added, by the omission of anything which is not stated. It is self-evident that an orderly Temple service is necessary in a recognized Temple, and the very condemnation of the sacrifices of the heathen implies legalized and authoritative sacrifices. It is incredible that a writer should continually uphold the honor and dignity of a priesthood that had no prescribed functions, and blame the people for worship on the high-places if they knew no other worship to practise. Whatever may have been the law-book that

was found in the reign of Josiah (and, after all has been said, it is not proved that it was nothing but the Code of Deuteronomy), the writer of our books proceeds on the supposition that there was one central sanctuary from the time of Solomon at least, and implies that Israel was in possession of laws and ceremonies distinctly opposed to those of the nations around them. If he does not furnish us with details of the history of ritual worship, it is simply because this lay beyond the purpose he had before him, and was only remotely connected with his guiding principle. *J. Robertson.*

#### THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES.

The consentient voice of the Jewish commentators on the Hebrew Scriptures declares both Chronicles and Ezra to have been written by Ezra. When both are critically examined and analyzed, the Hebrew tradition as to their authorship is very greatly strengthened and confirmed. The parts of Ezra where the writer uses the first person are admitted on all hands to have been the work of the "ready scribe" (Ezra 7 : 6). But the rest of Ezra is completely homogeneous in style with these parts, and must almost certainly have proceeded from the same writer. And between Ezra and Chronicles there is so very great a resemblance that the critics who care least for tradition pronounce them the composition of the same mind. The internal evidence thus entirely confirms the external testimony ; and Ezra's authorship of Chronicles may be regarded as not far short of being an "established fact." The fact of Ezra's authorship of Chronicles, which seems to us almost certain, throws much light on the scope and intention of the work, and on the question of how it came to be written. There is this peculiarity in Chronicles, markedly distinguishing it from all the other historical books of the Old Testament, that it is not a continuation of the previous history, but a repetition. The writer does not occupy new ground, but traverses ground which he knows well to have been previously trodden by others. He rewrites the events of Jewish history from the death of Saul to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, notwithstanding that they have been already put upon record by the authors of Samuel and Kings. We must then look for some motive which animated the writer of Chronicles, and induced him to commence and carry through an elaborate work, which at first sight has the appearance of being almost supererogatory. This motive is to be found in the circumstances of the Jewish na-

tion at the time when Chronicles was written. The people in their long and toilsome captivity, scattered among their conquerors, and ground down by taskwork, had forgotten their past, had become ignorant of their sacred books, and had even lost the capacity of grasping and retaining the long and complicated account of their former history which had been familiar to their ancestors. On their return to Palestine they were a band of emancipated slaves, ignorant, illiterate, and requiring very simple elementary teaching. Again, they were a multitude rather than a people ; in their long-continued oppression and isolation they had lost the sentiment of nationality, the very idea of patriotism ; they had forgotten their tribal distinctions and relationships ; and though they had not fallen away from the worship of Jehovah, they had come to have a very dim and faint notion of what that worship in reality was, as established by the greatest of their monarchs, David and Solomon. To restore the national life, to reunite the present with the past, to reawaken the slumbering spirit of patriotism, to recall the glories of old times, and set them before the nation as the standard which they should aim at reaching in the future, was the hard but grand task which the leaders of the Jewish people set themselves at this time, and which none did more to accomplish than the writer of Chronicles. Instead of throwing the people back upon their old histories, written on too large a scale for their present needs, and in language of a more or less archaic type, he composed for their use a condensed narrative, written in the idiom of the day, with frequent allusions to recent events, and brought down to his own times, which was far more calculated to affect them strongly and deeply than the ancient larger compositions. At the same time, having to deal with persons in a childish and undeveloped state, he adopted a tone not elsewhere found in the historical Scriptures—a didactic tone of extreme directness and simplicity—a plan of pointing the moral in every case, of openly ascribing all the events of the history to the Divine agency, and referring in the plainest language every great calamity or deliverance to the good or evil deeds of the monarch or the nation to whom they were sent as rewards or judgments.

The moral object of the writer of Chronicles, in the concluding as in the earlier sections, is his main one, and is throughout most distinctly—almost nakedly—indicated. He will show his nation, by the records of their past, that in

almost every instance temporal rewards and punishments were dispensed in exact accordance with the attitude of the king and people toward the national religion, signal vengeance following every neglect of the authorized rites, every insult offered to the priests, every profanation of the Temple, every introduction of an alien worship; while wealth, and glory, and military success, and prosperity of every kind accompanied the manifestations of a religious spirit. And here, as Chronicles now stands, he may be said to end. As the work, however, was originally written, he followed down the past into the present—he related the recovery as he had related the downfall of his nation; he placed on record the return from the Captivity, the rebuilding of the Temple, the second colonization under Artaxerxes Longimanus, and the religious reforms of Ezra. This portion of his work is, in our present arrangement of the Jewish Scriptures, separated off from the rest, and made into a distinct work, the Book of Ezra. We would impress upon the biblical student the incompleteness of Chronicles as it stands, and the propriety of reading it in connection with Ezra, and of viewing it as that history of their past which the "ready scribe," writing under Longimanus, about B.C. 456, thought best fitted to impress and improve the Jews of his day. G. R.

We must have regard to the period at which the writer of these books lived, and the circumstances of the people for whom he wrote, if we would understand the form in which they appear and the object for which they were composed. The national independence of Israel was a thing of the past, but the descendants of David, to whom had been given the promise of a sure house, survived. The Captivity had done its work; the exiles, thoroughly cured of the old tendency to idolatry, had been allowed to gather on their ancestral soil, to erect a temple on the ruins of that of Solomon, and to observe the rites of their national religion. The voice of prophecy had become silent; the two precious possessions that survived the Exile and bound the present to the past were the exercise of their religion and the offspring of David; round these clustered the hopes of the future, at a time when restored Israel was at the mercy of a heathen power for corporate existence and the semblance of national life. At such a time and in such circumstances an author, taking a review of the past history of his nation, saw everything in a peculiar light, and would approach his work with a peculiar purpose. It had become a settled conviction that

Israel had suffered for unfaithfulness in the matter of religion; and, as the forms of religion were more punctiliously observed after the Captivity, our author would look for the reigns in which these received due attention and dwell upon them as "the good old times" of the nation's life, while he would perceive and emphasize the fact that it was when these were neglected that the unfaithful kings had suffered. From this point of view he set himself the task of writing the whole history of his nation, so as to sustain the courage of his people in their depressed condition, and give them guidance and hope for the future. The encouragement was, that so long as the community, deprived though they were of their old political independence, adhered to the observances of their national religion, they would be preserved from mingling among the nations and being lost; and the hope was, that if they so remained steadfast to the covenant, the God of their fathers would remember "the sure mercies of David," and would, in His good time, "restore the kingdom to Israel." Such a book, in short, would contribute not a little to keep alive the persistent separate existence of the Jewish race, which is one of the most striking features of history, and to stamp upon their later religious life the character which it retained for the succeeding centuries. The book was at once the result of the new impulse that had been given to the observance of the law at the time of Ezra, and at the same time would tend to foster the same adherence to the forms of worship as the sole remaining bond of Israel's union and the mark of their separation from the heathen nations. *J. Robertson.*

*Probable Date.*—That the Book of Chronicles was composed after the return from the Captivity is evident, not only from its closing passage, but from other portions of it. A comparison of 1 Chron. 9:10-16 with Neh. 11:10-17 will show that almost the whole of 1 Chron. 9 belongs to the period after the Captivity. 1 Chron. 8 of the same part of the work contains a genealogy of the descendants of Zerubbabel (verses 19-24), which is continued down to, at least, the third generation. The evidence of style accords with the evidence furnished by the contents. The phraseology is similar to that of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, all books written after the Exile. It has numerous Aramaean forms, and at least one word derived from the Persian. The date cannot therefore well be earlier than B.C. 538, but may be later, and is indeed thought by some to be very considerably later. If Ezra was the author, the

date could not well be much later than B.C. 485, for Ezra probably died about that time. There is nothing in the contents or style of the work to make the date B.C. 450-485 improbable. B. C.

*Sources Used by the Author.* For the period from Saul to Zedekiah, which forms the chief subject of his work, the author of Chronicles seems to have possessed and used: (1) A general history, called the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah (or Judah and Israel), which had probably been compiled before his day from the two earlier separate works used by the author of Kings—the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, and the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel; (2) our present books of Samuel and Kings; and (3) a number of works, more full and ample in their details than any of these three, treating of certain periods, usually of the reigns of particular monarchs, the composition of a succession of prophets, and the real ultimate sources from which the general histories had been compiled by their writers. Of these, some twelve or thirteen are mentioned by the author of Chronicles in the course of his work (1 Chron. 27 : 24 ; 29 : 29 ; 2 Chron. 9 : 29 ; 12 : 15 ; 13 : 22 ; 20 : 34 ; 24 : 27 ; 26 : 22 ; 32 : 32) ; but it is quite possible, or rather very probable, that he possessed others besides those which he has named.

For the period from the Creation to the death of Saul, which forms the subject of 1 Chron. 1-8, the writer of Chronicles possessed and used: (1) The historical Books of our present Scriptures, from Genesis down to Ruth; and (2) various other documents, genealogical and historical, of which the exact nature cannot be stated, but which appear to have been in many cases exceedingly ancient and curious. There is reason to believe that the genealogies of families, and numerous important points of family history, were carefully preserved by the "chiefs of the fathers" in almost all the Israelite tribes, and were even carried through the trying time of the Captivity, so that the writer of Chronicles could make use of them. A large portion of his introductory section (1 Chron. 1-8) consists of statements unsupported by the earlier Scriptures; and these the author must have drawn from such (comparatively speaking) *private* sources as have been indicated. B. C.

*Relation of the Books of Kings to those of Chronicles.* It is manifest, and is universally admitted, that the former is by far the older work. While the Books of Chronicles were written especially for the Jews after their return from Babylon, the Book of Kings was

written for the whole of Israel before their common national existence was hopelessly quenched. Another comparison of considerable interest between the two histories may be drawn in respect to the main design, that design having a marked relation both to the individual station of the supposed writers and the peculiar circumstances of their country at the times of their writing. Jeremiah was himself a prophet. He lived while the prophetic office was in full vigor, in his own person, in Ezekiel and Daniel, and many others both true and false. In his eyes, as in truth, the main cause of the fearful calamities of his countrymen was their rejection and contempt of the Word of God in his mouth and that of the other prophets; and the one hope of deliverance lay in their hearkening to the prophets who still continued to speak to them in the name of the Lord. Accordingly we find in the Books of Kings great prominence given to the prophetic office. Ezra was only a priest. In his days the prophetic office had wholly fallen into abeyance. That evidence of the Jews being the people of God, which consisted in the presence of prophets among them, was no more. But to the men of his generation, the distinctive mark of the continuance of God's favor to their race was the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem, the restoration of the daily sacrifice and the Levitical worship, and the wonderful and providential renewal of the Mosaic institutions. The chief instrument, too, for preserving the Jewish remnant from absorption into the mass of heathenism, and for maintaining their national life till the coming of Messiah, was the maintenance of the Temple, its ministers, and its services. Hence we see at once that the chief care of a good and enlightened Jew of the age of Ezra, and all the more if he were himself a priest, would naturally be to enhance the value of the Levitical ritual and the dignity of the Levitical caste. And in compiling a history of the past glories of his race, he would as naturally select such passages as especially bore upon the sanctity of the priestly office, and show the deep concern taken by their ancestors in all that related to the honor of God's house, and the support of His ministering servants. Hence the Levitical character of the Books of Chronicles, and the presence of several detailed narratives not found in the Books of Kings, and the more frequent reference to the Mosaic institutions, may most naturally and simply be accounted for, without resorting to the absurd hypothesis that the ceremonial law was an in-

vention subsequent to the Captivity. Moreover, upon the principle that the sacred writers were influenced by natural feelings in their selection of their materials, it seems most appropriate that while the prophetic writer in Kings deals very fully with the kingdom of Israel, in which the prophets were much more illustrious than in Judah, the Levitical writer, on the contrary, should concentrate all his thoughts round Jerusalem, where alone the Levitical caste had all its power and functions, and should dwell upon all the instances preserved in existing monuments of the deeds and even the minutest ministrations of the priests and Levites, as well as of their faithfulness and sufferings in the cause of truth.

From the comparison of parallel narratives in the two books, it appears that the results are precisely what would naturally arise from the circumstances of the case. The writer of Chronicles, having the Books of Kings before

him, and to a great extent making those books the basis of his own, but also having his own personal views, predilections, and motives in writing, composing for a different age, and for people under very different circumstances, and, moreover, having before him the original authorities from which the Books of Kings were compiled, as well as some others, naturally rearranged the older narrative as suited his purpose and his tastes, gave in full passages which the other had abridged, inserted what had been wholly omitted, omitted some things which the other had inserted, including nearly everything relating to the kingdom of Israel, and showed the color of his own mind, not only in the nature of the passages which he selected from the ancient documents, but in the reflections which he frequently adds upon the events which he relates, and possibly also in the turn given to some of the speeches which he records. P. S.

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### Section 3.

#### DATED EVENTS FROM JEROBOAM TO THE EXILE.

BY PROFESSOR WILLIS J. BEECHER, D.D.

##### PREFATORY STATEMENTS.

ANY one who wishes to understand the chronological data of the Bible should, first of all, fix in his mind certain facts in regard to the mode in which dates are given in the Bible, and certain other facts in regard to the connection of biblical chronology with other chronology. Without this he is sure to misapprehend the questions involved. With a few simple facts in mind, it is actually less work for the average reader to perform the arithmetical operations required, and so reach conclusions for himself as to the dates, than it is to read what scholars have written, and thus form an opinion based upon the opinions of others.

1. The ordinary regnal years, in the Bible, are natural years determined by observation, beginning with a new moon near the spring equinox. There are several clear instances in which the months of the year are counted from this terminus (Ex. xii. 2, 3, 6, 18, cf. xiii. 4, xvi. 1, xl. 2, 17, etc., 2 Chron. xxix. 17, xxxv. 1, 1 Ki. vi. 1, 2 Chron. iii. 2, xxx. 2, 13, Esth. viii. 9, 12, 1 Ki. viii. 2, etc.), and no perfectly clear instances of their being counted from any

other terminus. Whether the Israelites, for the period between Solomon and the exile, knew of any other way of counting the years is a thing which I neither affirm nor deny; but at least, for this period, there is no instance in which the hypothesis of different sorts of years has any real utility.

2. The Bible method is to count by units only, disregarding fractions. The best instance by which to fix this in mind is that of the three days during which our Saviour lay in the grave. According to the commonly received understanding of the matter, the three days were Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; though, counting from sunset to sunset, He lay there only an hour or two or less of Friday, and less than twelve hours of Sunday. When the New Testament writers say that He was in the grave three days (in Matt. xii. 40, "three days and nights") they do not intend to be understood that He was there seventy-two hours, but only that He was there during some part of the time covered by three successive periods of twenty-four hours each. Exactly the same method is adopted in counting the years that the kings reigned.

3. This way of counting is unambiguous excepting in the case of the broken year in which one reign ends and the next begins. *The broken year is always counted, in full, to the closing reign.* Usually the "first year" of the new reign is the one that begins with the following new year. Thus the year 1889 is the last year of Cleveland, and the year 1893 the last year of Harrison. By the usual way of counting, the first year of Harrison is 1890, and the first year of Cleveland's second administration is 1894, and each reign is four years. By the method adopted in the Assyrian records, which are in this respect strictly parallel to the biblical records, an official act performed by Harrison in 1889, or by Cleveland in 1893, would be assigned, not to his "first year," but to his "accession year;" or some other like way of designating the year would be used. According to this mode of speaking, a king may actually be on the throne nearly a year before his "first year" begins.

But there is sometimes a variation from this way of speaking, and one which leads to ambiguities. *Sometimes the broken year is also counted to the following reign.* The year 1889, for example, already counted as the fourth year of Cleveland, may also be counted as the first year of Harrison. In this case Harrison's reign will be five years, and not four, and the year 1893 will be his fifth year. This way of counting appears occasionally in the Assyrian records. In the Bible it is commonly used in counting the reigns of the first four dynasties of the northern kingdom, and exceptionally elsewhere.

This peculiarity is important. For example, in 1 Ki. xv. 1, we are told that Abijam reigned in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam. Presumptively this means that the first year of his reign was the year corresponding to the eighteenth of Jeroboam; but instead, it may possibly mean that his first year is the one that began at the close of the eighteenth of Jeroboam, or, in other words, that his actual accession occurred at some time during the eighteenth year of Jeroboam. It is vital to the understanding of the statement that we determine in which of these two senses it is used. This can be done beyond a doubt, in nearly every case, by comparing the succession of cardinal numbers, as given in the Bible, with the succession of ordinal numbers; and it can be determined in no other way. All other methods of dealing with the difficulties in the case (by making averages, for example, or by emending the text, or by supposing artificial modes of counting, or years

of different sorts) are entirely fallacious, except as they are based on the previous correct performing of this work of comparison between the cardinal and ordinal numbers.

4. The most convenient point of contact between the biblical chronology of the kings and the chronology of the Greeks and Romans and of modern times is given in the fact that *the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was 604 B.C.* He became king at some time during B.C. 605, the year before his "first year." His first year was the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah (Jer. xxv. 1, and other passages). It is important to note here that the Ussher chronology, as found in the margins of our Bibles, wrongly gives this date as 606 B.C., and thus throws all synchronisms based upon it about two years out of their true relations.

5. In using the extra-biblical sources of information, we need to emphasize the principle of *going as near to the original sources as possible.* Secondary treatments of Assyrian and Babylonian history are numerous and conflicting; the primary statements in which this history comes into contact with that recorded in the Bible are much better ascertained than any of the theories built upon them.

These primary statements exist for us in three different forms: First, the original slabs, tablets, and other inscriptions themselves; second, photographs or other accurate copies in the original languages; third, translations. Much is still in dispute in regard to the translation of these records; but, fortunately, a large part of the material that bears on chronological questions is undisputed, and is of the kind that can be studied as well in translations as in the original. Fortunately, also, much of it is accessible in English translations. One who is an expert in the originals would criticise sharply much of the translation work that has been done, and would emphasize the fact that only a part of the records is available in translations. But only in rare instances would he either differ with the translations, or add to them, in the facts that bear on biblical chronology.

The following easily accessible books in English constitute a fairly good working library for these studies; and by the aid of these one can find his way to the entire literature of the subject:

*Records of the Past*, old series. Twelve small volumes. Samuel Bagster & Sons, London.

*Records of the Past*, new series. Six small volumes. Same publishers.

George Smith's *Assyrian Canon*.

George Smith's *Assyrian Discoveries*.

Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*.

A set of the *Transactions* and a set of the *Proceedings of The Society of Biblical Archaeology*.

A large amount of additional material is to be found in volumes and in journals of learned societies and other periodicals.

6. The most important sources for Oriental chronology, for the period now under consideration, are the following :

First. The biblical numerals.

Second. The history contained in the Bible, often throwing light on the numerals.

Third. The Assyrian Eponym Canon, a list of officers, one officer for every year, containing, in the imperfect copies now known, about 265 names, in a series backward from B.C. 647. The existing copies date, perhaps, from a time before the downfall of Assyria. There are some slight discrepancies, but the Canon is in a high degree trustworthy. Some copies have historical notes appended, and these are not always confirmed by the other Assyrian records. Translations may be found in Smith's *Assyrian Canon*, in *Records of the Past*, new series, vol. ii., in Schrader, vol. ii., in the *Assyrische Lese-stücke* of Professor Friedrich Delitzsch, and in other works.

Fourth. Assyrian records, variously throwing light on the Canon. Among these are annals of Shalmaneser II., Sargon, Sennacherib, Esar-haddon, Assur-bani-pal, and other kings, giving dated accounts of their exploits, year by year; and other accounts, less well dated, of Tiglath-pileser III. and others.

Fifth. Ancient Babylonian documents, especially what may be called, in a general way, the *Babylonian Chronicles*, written in the Persian period or earlier, including lists of kings, with the years they reigned, other lists with dated records of exploits in the reign of each king, and the so-called "synchronous history" of Babylonia and Assyria. These documents carry the chronology back to a very early date, but they are so marred at various places as to break up the continuity of it. Translations may be found in the new series of the *Records of the Past*, vols. i., iv., v.

Sixth. The Canon of Ptolemy, a list of Grecian, Persian, and Babylonian kings, with the years of their reigns, back to 747 B.C. Made after Christ by an Alexandrian astronomer, and undervalued in the Ussher chronology, but now certainly known to be correct. The part of it that belongs to the Assyrian and Babylonian

periods may be found in Smith's *Canon* and in *Records of the Past*, new series, vol. i.

Seventh. Calculated eclipses, especially an eclipse of the sun, B.C. 763, the tenth year of Assur-daan, king of Assyria.

Eighth. Certain "long numbers." See notes on A.Di. 241, 265, 361, 390, 396.

7. *All continuous chronology earlier than the accession of Assur-daan of Assyria, 773 B.C., and all continuous biblical chronology earlier than the accession of Hezekiah, 723 B.C., is conjectural, and is in dispute.* Back to these dates the sources just mentioned substantially agree, and we have independent lines of evidence, one confirming the other. The possible differences of opinion are differences as to details. But for the time immediately before 773 B.C. we have only the Bible, vaguely confirmed by the long numbers of Josephus and the Assyrian eponym list, and these, as commonly interpreted, are in contradiction. Assyriologists insist that the list of eponyms is continuous; and if it is, it makes the interval between Jehu and Hezekiah about fifty years less than the numbers in the Bible apparently make it. It is supposable that either the one chronology or the other is false. Again, it is supposable that there is a break in the continuity of the Assyrian list, which is, at a point just earlier than 773 B.C., unsupported by any strong evidence. Still, again, it is supposable that the Bible numbers overlap each other, and can be so understood as to fit the shorter period. The problem may some time be solved, but at present it is unsolved—that is, there is no one solution that can positively be proved to be true, and none in which men generally agree. And most of the dates for the kings between Jehu and Hezekiah are involved in these unsettled interpretations.

8. For the period before Hezekiah, therefore, it is not claimed that the dates in the following list are known to be correct; it is only claimed that they are the dates that *seem* to be given in the Bible. Taking the Bible statements at their apparent value, these dates are exact, within very narrow limits of variation. Any person can verify them, with arithmetical certainty, by beginning at 604 B.C. and working forward or backward. So far there is really no room for doubt. Whether this apparent meaning of the Bible numbers is the true meaning is another question. Most of the published schemes assume that it is not the true meaning. They do not profess to give the Bible numerals simply, but these numerals so corrected or interpreted as to make them consistent with the



facts ; but none of these schemes succeeds in winning acceptance to the exclusion of the others. It seems to me better, therefore, not to attempt a final statement of the chronology, but simply to give the Bible numbers at their apparent value.

9. The date 982 B.C. for the first year of Jeroboam and Rehoboam (the date with which our list begins) may be verified by beginning at 604 B.C. and working back to it ; but it seems well to give, at the outset, a more compact verification of it. The fourth year of Jehoiakim of Judah was 604 B.C. To 604 add the previous 8 years of Jehoiakim, the 31 years of Josiah (2 Ki. xxii. 1), the 2 years of Amon (2 Ki. xxi. 19), the 55 years of Manasseh (2 Ki. xxi. 1), the 29 years of Hezekiah (2 Ki. xviii. 2), the 16 years of Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 2), the 16 years of Jotham (2 Ki. xv. 33), and the 52 years of Uzziah (2 Ki. xv. 2), and we have 808 B.C. for the first year of Uzziah. But a comparison of the cardinal and ordinal numbers shows that the 16th year of Ahaz was the first year of Hezekiah, so that there is here the overlapping of one year, and there is probably another overlapping of a year in the case of Amon (see notes on the list at these places). Deducting these two years, we have 806 B.C. as the true first year of Uzziah, according to the Bible. The first year of Uzziah was the 27th of Jeroboam II. (2 Ki. xv. 1), and Jeroboam's first year was the 15th of Amaziah (2 Ki. xiv. 23). To 806 add 26 years of Jeroboam II., 14 years of Amaziah, 40 years of Joash (2 Ki. xii. 1), 6 years of Athaliah (2 Ki. xi. 3), and 90 years (see the list) for the times before Athaliah, and we have 982 B.C. for the first year of the two kingdoms.

If we assume that the Assyrian eponym list is continuous throughout, but otherwise retain this computation unmodified, the date for the beginning of the two kingdoms will be reduced to 981 B.C. This is about the date assigned by most Assyrian scholars. By variant counting, either of these dates might be made a year or two more or a year or two less. As the evidence now stands, these two dates for the be-

ginning of the two kingdoms are the only ones that have any claim to be regarded as based on primary evidence. The different dates for this event given in recent chronological schemes are mainly either compromises between these two or attempts to reconcile them.

This date, as given in the margins of our Bibles, is 975 B.C., 7 years less than that given in our list. This difference is accounted for as follows : First, the marginal chronology shortens the period by 11 years by assuming a coreign (of which there is neither proof nor disproof) of Jeroboam II. with his father (2 Ki. xv. 1). On the other hand, it incorrectly lengthens the period two years by taking 606 B.C. as the first year of Nebuchadnezzar. Further, it does not count one of the years of Amon as overlapping, and thus gains a year. Thus the 11 years of difference are reduced to 8 years, leaving one year to be accounted for by variation of method. Except for these differences and others depending upon them, the variations between our list and the marginal chronology are slight.

9. In the list the events are dated in years A.D. (Anno Discidii, the year of the disruption of the kingdom), as well as in years B.C. This has two important advantages : First, it is easier to work with an increasing series of numerals than with a decreasing series, as years B.C. must necessarily be. Second, it enables us to block together in their proper relations the earlier events, in regard to which we can only conjecture the proper date in years B.C. It gives us a method, for example, by which we can make an accurate and intelligible statement of the synchronisms between Shalmaneser II. and Ahab and Jehu, even if there be an uncertainty of half a century as to the date B.C. when these events occurred ; and this is an important advantage.

The list does not contain all the dated events ; and conjectural dates and dates of particular prophecies are inserted only when they serve to throw light on the continuity of the history.

B.C.	A.Di.	
982	1	1st y. of Jeroboam ; 1st y. of Rehoboam (1 Ki. xii., 2 Chron. x.) ; <b>SHEMAIAH</b> ; <b>JEDO</b> (wrongly transliterated <b>IDDO</b> , 2 Chron. ix. 29 cf. <i>Jos. Ant.</i> VIII. ix., 1 Ki. xiii.) ; <b>АНІАА</b> .
980	3	Rehoboam forsakes the way of David (2 Chron. xi. 17, xii. 1).
978	5	Invasion of Shishak (1 Ki. xiv. 25, 2 Chron. xii. 2).
966	17	17th y. of Rehoboam ; his death, and accession of Abijam (1 Ki. xiv. 21, 31, 2 Chron. xii. 13).

B.C.	A.DI.	
965	18	18th y. of Jeroboam ; 1st y. of Abijam (1 Ki. xv. 1, 2 Chron. xiii. 1).
968	20	20th y. of Jeroboam ; 3rd y. of Abijam ; his death, and accession of Asa (1 Ki. xv. 2, 8, 2 Chron. xiii. 2).
963	21	1st y. of Asa, following 20th y. of Jeroboam (1 Ki. xv. 9) ; 2nd y. of Rimman-nirari II., king of Assyria, the first king within the limits of the existing copies of the Assyrian Eponym list.*
961	22	22nd y. of Jeroboam ; his death (1 Ki. xiv. 20) ; 1st y. of Nadab, and 2nd of Asa (1 Ki. xv. 25).
960	23	2nd y. of Nadab ; his death (1 Ki. xv. 25) ; 1st y. of Baasha and 3rd y. of Asa (1 Ki. xv. 28, 33).
956	27	Jehoshaphat born (1 Ki. xxii. 41, 42). Ten years of quiet (2 Chron. xiv. 1). Invasion of Zerah (2 Chron. xiv. 9).
948	35	15th y. of Asa, and great religious gathering (2 Chron. xv. 10) ; ODED (2 Chron. xv. 8) ; AZARIAH, son of Oded (2 Chron. xv. 1).
947	36	" 36th y. of the kingdom of Asa " (2 Chron. xvi. 1) ; † war with Baasha (2 Chron. xvi. 1 sq., 1 Ki. xv. 16 sq.) ; HANANI (2 Chron. xvi. 7) ; Asa's league with Benhadad against Baasha.
941	42	1st y. of Tiglath-uras II. of Assyria.
937	46	24th y. of Baasha and 26th of Asa ; death of Baasha (1 Ki. xv. 33) ; 1st y. of Elah (1 Ki. xvi. 8-10) ; JEHU, son of Hanani (perhaps earlier, 1 Ki. xvi. 1).
936	47	2nd y. of Elah and 27th of Asa ; Zimri (1 Ki. xvi. 10, 15) ; 1st y. of Omri over part of northern Israel (1 Ki. xvi. 16, 28, 29). Tibni (1 Ki. xvi. 21).
935	48	1st y. of Assur-nazir-pal of Assyria. Marriage of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Ki. xvi. 31) ; ‡ Omri reconquers Moab (2 Ki. i. 1, and the Moabite Stone).§
932	51	Omri is king—probably sole king, on the death of Tibni—81st of Asa (1 Ki. xvi. 23), probably just at the close of the 80th of Asa (Jos. Ant. VIII. xii. 5) ; Jehoram of Judah born (2 Ki. viii. 16, 17). Omri moves the capital to Samaria, six years after one or the other of the two dates given for his accession—either A.DI. 53 or 56 (1 Ki. xvi. 23, 24).
926	57	11th y. of Omri ; Jehoshaphat becomes co-regnant with Asa (Sept. of 1 Ki. xvi. 28, perhaps).

\* This is computed, of course, according to the apparent value of the Bible numerals. There is a definite and exact synchronism, in the time of Ahab and Jehu, between the biblical and the Assyrian dates (see note at B.C. 905) ; and by comparing the numerals back from that date, we obtain the dates for Rimman-nirari II. On the supposition that the Assyrian list is continuous, the second year of Rimman-nirari is 911 B.C., and this is the date actually accepted by most Assyrian scholars.

In different Assyriological works this name, like many other Assyrian names, appears in several different forms, some of them bearing no resemblance one to another. Those who deal with these matters have to learn to identify particular men, no matter for the different forms their names may take.

† Here and in the previous verse the numerals cannot refer to the personal reign of Asa, for the 35th and 36th years of his personal reign came after the death of Baasha. The hypothesis that here is a genuine case of reckoning in years A.DI. fits well all the facts in the case.

‡ This marriage cannot have been much earlier than this date, for it certainly did not take place till after Omri came to the throne ; and it cannot have been much later, for the grandson of Ahab and Jezebel was 22 years old at the beginning of A.DI. 90 (2 Ki. viii. 25, 26).

§ The Moabite Stone says, according to the reading that now seems to be preferred, that the oppression of Moab, in the days of Omri and part of the days of his " son," lasted 40 years. This seems to imply that the 40 years closed before the overthrow of Omri's dynasty, which occurred A.DI. 90, hence Omri's conquest of Moab was earlier than A.DI. 50.

B.C.	A.Di.	
925	58	12th y. of Omri ; 38th y. of Asa ; 1st y. of Ahab (1 Ki. xvi. 29) ; 2nd y. of Jehoshaphat (Sept. of 1 Ki. xvi. 28).*
924	59	Asa's disease, his 39th y. (1 Ki. xv. 23, 2 Chron. xvi. 12).
922	61	41st y. of Asa ; his death and accession of Jehoshaphat (1 Ki. xv. 10, 2 Chron. xvi. 13, xvii. 1).
921	62	1st y. of Jehoshaphat, following 4th y. of Ahab (1 Ki. xxii. 41). "Strengthened himself against Israel" (2 Chron. xvii. 1).
919	64	3rd y. of Jehoshaphat ; teaching (2 Chron. xvii. 7-9).
916	67	Marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah (2 Chron. xviii. 1, cf. 1 Ki. xxii., 2 Chron. xxii. 2, xxi. 6, 2 Ki. viii. 18, 25, 26, etc.).†
915	68	Ahaziah of Judah born, 22 years before the close of the 11th y. of Jehoram of Israel (2 Ki. viii. 25, 26, ix. 29, see A.Di. 90). Shunammite's son promised, etc. (2 Ki. iv. 16) ; ELISHA.‡ Ahab persecutes the prophets (1 Ki. xviii. 4, etc.).
911	72	25th y. of Assur-nazir-pal of Assyria, his death, and accession of Shalmaneser II.
910	73	1st y. of Shalmaneser II. Close of the 3½ years of drought, etc. (1 Ki. xvii.-xix.) ; ELIJAH.
909	74	Shalmaneser on the Orontes, the Mediterranean, and Lebanon ; his 2nd y.
907	76	1st defeat of Benhadad by Ahab (1 Ki. xx. 1-22).
906	77	2nd defeat of Benhadad (1 Ki. xx. 22-43, xxii. 1, 2) ; followed by 3 years of peace with Syria, the "third year" being the last y. of Ahab. Naboth (1 Ki. xxi.).
905	78	17th y. of Jehoshaphat, and 1st y. of Ahaziah of Israel (1 Ki. xxii. 51) ; it is a co-reign, as the y. is the 21st of Ahab ; 6th y. of Shalmaneser, when he defeated a coalition of which Benhadad was chief and Ahab one of the allies.§
904	79	22nd y. of Ahab (1 Ki. xvi. 29) ; his death ; MICAH, son of Imlah (1 Ki. xxii.) ; 2nd y. of Ahaziah ; his death (1 Ki. xxii. 51, 2 Ki. i.) ; revolt of Meshah (2 Ki. i. 1, and Moabite Stone) ; Jehoshaphat's shipping alliance with Ahaziah (1 Ki. xxii. 48, 49) ; ELIEZER, son of Dodavah (2 Chron. xx. 37) ; fire from heaven

\* The Septuagint may be correct in assigning this co-reign to Jehoshaphat ; but it contradicts the Hebrew when it counts the co-reign as a part of his 25 years.

† Jehoram was now 16 or 17 years old, and Athaliah about the same age (see A.Di. 51 and before). Their age proves that the marriage cannot have occurred much earlier, and the age of Ahaziah, their son (see A.Di. 68), proves that it cannot have been later.

‡ The king spoken of in 2 Ki. viii. 1-8 is Jehoram ; for Benhadad of Syria has not yet been succeeded by Hazael ; hence the raising of the-Shunammite's son from the dead, after he was "grown" (2 Ki. iv. 18), occurred more than 7 years (2 Ki. viii. 1-8) before the death of Joram ; hence his birth must have occurred some years before the close of the reign of Ahab. As the prophets of Jehovah seem at the time to have been safe and influential (2 Ki. iv. 13, for instance), we are safe in placing it before Ahab's persecution of the prophets began. It does not follow that Elisha was senior to Elijah, but only that this incident is earlier than any incident that is related of Elijah.

§ This synchronism is perfectly definite. Shalmaneser says that he defeated Ahab, in coalition with Benhadad, the 6th y. of his own reign, and received tribute from Jehu the 18th year ; hence the 6th y. of Shalmaneser cannot be later than the 21st of Ahab ; for Ahab died the following year, and was then not in alliance with Benhadad. And the 6th of Shalmaneser cannot have been earlier than the 21st of Ahab ; for, if it were, the 18th of Shalmaneser would fall earlier than the 12th of Joram, A.Di. 90, the accession year of Jehu.

The taking of Ahaziah into co-regnancy was an arrangement made in connection with the coalition against Assyria. If 2 Ki. i. 17 is correct, a similar arrangement was made at the same time in Judah, Jehoram becoming co-king with Jehoshaphat. It is likely enough that this was done, though, if it was, the arrangement was soon changed. If here was a co-reign it was temporary, and was a different thing from the co-reign of a few years later, mentioned in 2 Ki. viii. 16, 2 Chron. xxi. 4, 5.

B.C.	A.D.	
		(2 Ki. i.); Jehoshaphat's reform, and judging mission (2 Chron. xix.); invasion (led by Mesha ? helped by Assyria ?) by Moab, Ammon, and others (2 Chron. xx., and perhaps Ps. lxxxiii.).
901	82	10th y. of Shalmaneser ; Benhadad and allies defeated by him.* Somewhere about this time belong Elijah's translation, most of Elisha's miracles (2 Ki. ii.-viii.), and the beginning of the 7 years of famine (2 Ki. viii. 1-8).
900	83	11th of Shalmaneser ; Benhadad and allies defeated again ; 5th of Jehoram of Israel ; Jehoram of Judah becomes co-regnant with Jehoshaphat (2 Ki. viii. 16, 2 Chron. xxi. 4, 5) ; Mesha defeated (2 Ki. iii.), the successes recorded on the Moabite Stone coming later ; posthumous message from Elijah (2 Chron. xxi. 12).
897	86	14th y. of Shalmaneser ; Benhadad and allies defeated again ; 25th y. of Jehoshaphat ; his death (1 Ki. xxii. 42), Jehoram becoming sole king. Edom and Libnah revolt ; Arabian and Philistine invasion ; Syrian guerillas and invasion in the northern kingdom (2 Ki. viii. 20-22, 2 Chron. xxi. 8-xxii. 1, 2 Ki. vi. vii) ; Moab, under Mesha, becomes independent (Moabite Stone).
893	90	8th y. of Jehoram of Judah (2 Ki. viii. 17) ; 12th y. of Jehoram of Israel, and 1st y. of Ahaziah of Judah (2 Ki. viii. 25) ; † death of these two, and accession of Jehu (2 Ki. ix., x.) ; Hazael king in Damascus (2 Ki. viii. 7-15, 28) ; 18th y. of Shalmaneser, in which he overthrows Hazael, and takes tribute from Jehu.
892	91	1st y. of Jehu ; 1st y. of Athaliah ; Shalmaneser cuts cedars in Lebanon.
890	93	Shalmaneser, in his 21st y., conquers Hazael again.
887	96	6th y. of Athaliah (2 Ki. xi. 3, 4).
886	97	1st y. of Joash (2 Ki. xi. 4 sq.). In the last years of Shalmaneser a great revolt in Assyria, under Assur-dayin.
876	107	35th y. of Shalmaneser ; accession of Samas-rimman.
875	108	1st y. of Samas-rimman ; he conquers Assur-dayin.
874	109	Assyrian operations on the Mediterranean coast.
873	110	Assyrians at the Mediterranean again.
871	112	Amaziah born (2 Ki. xiv. 2). During the reign of Jehu and his successors Israel suffered both from Hazael and from the Moabites (2 Ki. x. 32 sq., xiii. 20, etc.). Here belong the triumphs of Mesha, as recorded on the Moabite Stone.
865	118	28th y. of Jehu (2 Ki. x. 36) ; his death ; accession of Jehoahaz. ‡
864	119	1st y. of Jehoahaz ; 28rd y. of Joash ; he pushes the work of repairing the temple (2 Ki. xii. 6).
863	120	13th y. of Samas-rimman ; accession of Rimman-nirari III.
862	121	1st y. of Rimman-nirari.
850	138	37th y. of Joash ; co-reign of Jehoash of Israel with Jehoahaz begins (2 Ki. xiii. 10).
848	135	17th of Jehoahaz (2 Ki. xiii. 1) ; Hazael reduces Israel low, takes Gath, and at-

\* It is suspicious that Shalmaneser has to defeat Benhadad and his allies so often. If we had the Syrian accounts we should perhaps find these battles claimed as victories, and credit given to a certain great man of Damascus named Naaman (2 Ki. v.).

† Jehoram died just at the beginning of a new year (2 Chron. xxi. 18, 19), so that the narrator in 2 Ki. ix. 29 counts his successor as from the 11th of Jehoram of Israel, instead of from the 12th.

‡ Josephus here gives different numerals, which are workable, and, if accepted, shorten the time by two years.

B.C. A.D.

- tacks Jerusalem (2 Ki. xiii. 2-9, xii. 17, 18, 2 Chron. xxiv. 28-29); death of Jehoahaz, and accession of Jehoash of Israel; encouraging promises of Elisha before his death; the prophecy of JOEL.\*
- Rimman-nirari III. represents himself as taking tribute from all this region, and reducing Mariha, king of Damascus.†
- 847 186 40th y. of Joash (2 Ki. xii. 1); his death, and accession of Amaziah.
- 846 187 2nd y. of Jehoash of Israel, and 1st y. of Amaziah (2 Ki. xiv. 1).  
Successes of Jehoash over the Syrians under Benhadad, the successor of Hazael (2 Ki. xiii. 24, 25).  
Amaziah's victory over Edom (2 Ki. xiv. 7, 2 Chron. xxv. 5-16); OBADIAH. (?)  
Jehoash of Israel captures Jerusalem (2 Ki. xiv. 8-14, 2 Chron. xxv. 17-24).
- 884 149 29th y. of Rimman-nirari, and his death.  
Not far from this time, the events of the Book of JONAH; also Jonah's prophecies of the successes of Jeroboam II. (2 Ki. xiv. 25).‡

\* Some place Joel earlier than this, while many regard Joel as post-exilial.

† The date of this inscription is lost. In the eponym canon Rimman-nirari is said to have made an expedition to Arpad in his sixth year, and another to "over the sea" in his ninth year. Schrader holds that the latter is the expedition referred to in the inscription, but this identification rests on slender evidence. More probably the expedition was later, just before Jehoash of Israel began to gain victories over the younger Benhadad. Rimman-nirari calls the king whom he reduced Mariha—that is, the Lord. Perhaps this is a title rather than a name, the king being either Hazael or his successor Benhadad. Schrader makes him to be the successor of this Benhadad, but this brings the Assyrian records into contradiction with the biblical records.

‡ The Bible numerals apparently give us 61 years as the duration of the interval between the death of Rimman-nirari III. and the accession of Assur-daan III. For this interval the Assyrian eponym list gives but one king, Shalmaneser III., who reigned 10 years. There is some slight evidence to the effect that his reign immediately preceded that of Assur-daan, and, provisionally, we place him in that position, leaving a clean interval of 51 years not accounted for in the Assyrian canon.

Is it true that there was such an interval? Or must the biblical dates be so corrected, and made to overlap one another, that the seeming interval will be extinguished? I shall not attempt to answer this question. But it is worth while to notice that it can only be answered by studying the history of the period, and that, at present, we have no materials for this study, except those found in the Bible. The Assyrian records are silent.

But their silence is not quite without significance. Whether this interval was 10 years or 61 years, it was an interval of revolution. Just before the interval of silence begins Rimman-nirari is collecting tribute over all the region, to the Mediterranean, having inherited this domain from his fathers. Just after its close the Assyrian kings have to reconquer the region (see note at 765 B.C.). This shows that they had lost their hold upon it.

The interval, therefore, whether long or short, was a time of Assyrian weakness. Jonah's visit to Nineveh is somehow connected with this time of weakness. Jeroboam's successes are also connected with it. After humbling Damascus, Assyria herself lost her hold of power. This combination of circumstances enabled Jeroboam to seize and hold the leadership of the confederated nations between the upper Euphrates and the Mediterranean. It was substantially the same body of nations in which Benhadad exercised the hegemony in the times of Ahab; but Jeroboam's dominion was probably something more permanent than a mere hegemony for purposes of war.

The Assyrian records represent (see note at 765 B.C.) that, when they reconquered the region, Azariah of Judah was at the head of these confederated peoples; and this agrees with the large military establishment attributed to Azariah in the Bible, and with such hints as the one in Zech. xi. 10. Many assume that the reigns of Jeroboam and Uzziah were a period of bitter hostility between the northern and southern kingdoms, but all the evidence indicates the contrary. It was a period of growing prosperity for both kingdoms, and therefore a period when they were closely united by common interests. Uzziah could hardly have succeeded Jeroboam in the leadership of the confederacy, unless his relations with the northern kingdom had been cordial. If there was an expectation that the two kingdoms would now be reunited, under the dynasty of David, that accounts for the interregnum in Israel that followed the death of Jeroboam. In the same way we may account for the fact that Amos and Hosea, just at this time, urge upon the northern Israelites the claims of David their king, as well as of Jehovah their God (Am. ix. 11, Hos. iii. 5).

Possibly the fact of this time of Assyrian adversity may have a bearing on other questions. When the scribes came to write up the history, did they deliberately throw out this half century of disgrace to Assyria? Is there this much of truth in the tradition that Nabonassar suppressed

B.C.	A.D.I.	
832	151	15th y. of Amaziah ; 16th y. of Joash of Israel ; 1st y. of Jeroboam II. (2 Ki. xiv. 28).
822	161	Uzziah born (2 Ki. xv. 1, 2).
818	165	29th y. of Amaziah ; his death (2 Ki. xiv. 2, 17).
806	177	27th y. of Jeroboam ; 1st y. of Uzziah (2 Ki. xv. 1, 2).*
798	190	Prophecies of AMOS (?) ; first prophecy of HOSEA (chaps. i., ii.). ?
792	191	41st y. of Jeroboam II. ; his death (2 Ki. xiv. 28), followed by interregnum in Israel.
791	192	The great earthquake (Am. i. 1). ? Second prophecy of HOSEA (chap. iii.). ?
782	201	1st y. of Shalmaneser III. of Assyria.
779	204	Jotham born (2 Ki. xv. 82, 83). Shalman storms Beth-arbel (Hos. x. 14). Perhaps Arbela in the Ararat region, in which region the Assyrian canon says that Shalmaneser III. operated.
778	210	10th y. of Shalmaneser ; expedition to Damascus ; his death, and accession of Assur-daan III.
772	211	1st y. of Assur-daan ; expedition to Hadrach. Later prophecies of HOSEA (chaps. iv.-x.). ? †
769	214	38th y. of Uzziah ; Zechariah king the last six months of the year (2 Ki. xv. 8).
768	215	39th y. of Uzziah ; Shallum 30 days (2 Ki. xv. 18) ; accession of Menahem (2 Ki. xv. 17).
767	216	1st y. of Menahem. Retirement of Uzziah (2 Ki. xv. 5, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16-23) ? ; Jotham regent, 12 years of age ; earliest prophecy of ISAIAH (ii.-iv.). ?
765	218	8th y. of Assur-daan (3rd y. of Menahem and 42nd y. of Uzziah) ; the Assyrians break up a confederacy extending from Hamath southward, headed by Uzziah ; Menahem pays tribute to Pul of Assyria (2 Ki. xv. 17-21).

the records of the kings who preceded him ? Does this afford an explanation at once of the differences between the biblical and Assyrian chronologies, and of the silence of the Assyrian annals at this point ?

\* This makes an interregnum of 11 years in Judah between the death of Amaziah and the accession of Uzziah. To avoid this, the chronology of the marginal Bibles assumes that the 27th year of Jeroboam is here not counted from his 1st year in the 15th of Amaziah, but from a time 11 years earlier, when he is assumed to have become co-regnant with his father. Of this we could judge better if we knew more of the history of those times. Against this assumed co-reign it is to be said that the usual evidence is lacking, there being here no sufficient numerical data. Further, the assumption of a co-reign here breaks up the agreement with the "long numbers" (see A. Di. 241, 265, 362, 390, 396).

† These prophecies are largely an indignant protest against intrigues with Assyria and Egypt, and especially with an Assyrian king whom Hosea calls Jareb (v. 13, x. 6). Jareb signifies one who takes part in contested causes, as a champion, or judge, or umpire. It reads like a transformation of the Assyrian name Daan, which has the same meaning. So long as the interregnum in Israel continued, a process of assimilation was going on between the two kingdoms, which would ultimately lead to union ; but now that the Assyrians are again in the region, they are intriguing to break up this process and get a king once more on the northern throne, to the end that, by causing divisions, they may the more easily conquer these peoples. Hosea is indignant at the success of their intrigues, and speaks accordingly.

‡ The account is found on two mutilated fragments, Rawlinson's *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, vol. iii., page 9, Nos. 2, 3 ; Smith's *Assyrian Canon*, page 117 sq. ; Smith's *Assyrian Discoveries*, page 275 sq. ; Schrader on 2 Ki. xv., etc. The inscriptions speak of fighting, and we may therefore infer that they claim a great Assyrian victory. Assyriologists seem to be agreed in assigning these inscriptions to Tiglath-pileser III., though they do not contain his name, and present a historical situation different from that presented by any that contain his name. They say that the Assyrian king not only defeated Azariah, but took tribute from Rezin of Damascus and

B.C. A.D.

		Second prophecy of ISAIAH (chap. v.) ?
		The Hadrach burden in ZECHARIAH (ix.-xi.) ?
763	220	10th y. of Assur-daan ; great eclipse, June 15 ; Ahaz born (according to Sept. of 2 Chron. xxviii. 1).
758	225	10th y. of Menahem ; his death and accession of Pekahiah (2 Ki. xv. 17, 22) ; Ahaz born (Hebrew of 2 Chron. xxviii. 1).
757	226	50th y. of Uzziah ; 1st y. of Pekahiah (2 Ki. xv. 23).
756	227	2nd y. of Pekahiah ; his death ; accession of Pekah.
755	228	52nd y. of Uzziah ; his death ; accession of Jotham ; 1st y. of Pekah (2 Ki. xv. 27, 32, 33) ; 18th y. of Assur-daan III. ; his death ; accession of Assur-nirari II. ; third prophecy of ISAIAH (chap. vi.).
754	229	2nd y. of Pekah ; 1st y. of Jotham ; 1st y. of Assur-nirari.
747	236	1st y. of Nabonassar of Babylon ; 1st y. of the celebrated Canon of Ptolemy ; Hezekiah born (2 Ki. xviii. 1, 2).*
745	238	10th y. of Assur-nirari ; his death ; accession of Tiglath-pileser III. (11th y. of Pekah ; 10th y. of Jotham) ; Tiglath-pileser seizes Babylonia.
744	239	1st y. of Tiglath-pileser ; conquests in the east. Deportations from east of the Jordan (1 Chron. v. 6, 26).† MICAH begins to prophesy (i. 1), continuing to the earlier years of Hezekiah. The historical situation fits that of the "burden," ZECHARIAH xii.-xiv. To this period Josephus assigns NAHUM.‡ Rezin and Pekah invade Judah (2 Ki. xv. 37).

Menahem of Samaria. But unless we reject the Bible statements by the wholesale, we must hold that both Azariah and Menahem were dead some years before Tiglath-pileser came to the throne, B.C. 745. Further, each of the two inscriptions gives an account of an expedition to Hadrach, and the Eponym list assigns to Assur-daan three expeditions to Hadrach, and none to any other monarch ; though Hadrach is mentioned in some undoubted Tiglath-pileser inscriptions. Further, one of the two inscriptions proceeds to tell what happened in the 9th year of the king in question, thus apparently assigning the previous events to his 8th year ; but the Eponym list says that Tiglath-pileser was in Media his 8th year, while it ascribes to Assur-daan's 8th year one of his three expeditions to Hadrach.

The Bible says that the Assyrian king to whom Menahem paid tribute was Pul ; and there are strong reasons for identifying the name Pul with the name Tiglath-pileser. But there may have been two men of the same name, or Tiglath-pileser III. may have been, at this time, 20 years before he became king, the commander of the Assyrian forces in Palestine. Either of these suppositions is more credible than that the whole biblical account is to be discarded.

The views thus indicated seem to me tenable. The view, however, more commonly held by recent scholars is that the events mentioned in this inscription, instead of being the events of a single expedition, extended over several years previous to B.C. 737, the 8th year of Tiglath-pileser, and that they were practically continuous with Tiglath-pileser's interference in the times of Pekah and Ahaz.

\* As this makes Ahaz but 11 years old at his son's birth, there is probably a numerical error somewhere.

† In its details this deportation is different from any other mentioned in the Bible. The Assyrian king is called Pul "and" Tiglath-pileser, whether the distinction intended be between two persons or between two names of the same person. According to the Eponym list, Tiglath-pileser was at Arpad four successive years, B.C. 743-740, and he may have ravaged this region during any part of that time.

Possibly Josephus (*Ant.* IX. xiv. 1) gives a specific date for this deportation. He says that the deportation at the downfall of Samaria occurred 240 years and 7 months after the revolt under Rehoboam. His numerals are certainly not correct for that final deportation, but they are so explicit as to suggest that they may be historical ; and so the question suggests itself whether they may refer to some earlier deportation. The events of the time of Menahem are too early. If we follow the chronology of Ussher, the date of Josephus might coincide with the later deportation of the time of Ahaz ; but it seems to me that the best supported conjecture is that, while Tiglath-pileser was operating at Arpad, an expedition was made, in his 3rd year, to the east of the Jordan.

‡ See *Ant.* IX. xi. 3. He says further that this was 115 years before the downfall of Nineveh. This would date the final overthrow of Nineveh, 629-624 B.C. The date of this event must still

B.C.	A.Di.	
739	244	17th y. of Pekah ; 16th y. of Jotham ; his death ; accession of Ahaz (2 Ki. xvi. 1, 2).
738	245	1st y. of Ahaz. Rezin and Pekah again operate against Judah (2 Chron. xxviii. 1-15, 2 Ki. xvi. 5 sq., Isa. vii. sq.) ; Philistine and Edomite invasion (2 Chron. xxviii. 17, 18) ; Ahaz seeks help from Tiglath-pileser. ODED (2 Chron. xxviii. 9). Tiglath-pileser captures towns in northern Palestine, deporting many people (2 Ki. xv. 29) ; Ahaz becomes tributary.*
736	247	20th y. of Pekah ; 20th y. of Jotham, counting from his accession ; Pekah smitten by Hoshea, who succeeds him (2 Ki. xv. 30).
734	249	Tiglath-pileser in Palestine (Eponym canon).
733	250	Tiglath-pileser in Damascus (Ep. can.).
732	251	Tiglath-pileser in Damascus (Ep. can.). Within these years the visit of Ahaz to Damascus (2 Ki. xvi. 10 sq., 2 Chron. xxviii. 23) ; the march upon Jerusalem (Isa. x. 28 sq.) ; the uttering of the fourth prophecy of ISALAH (vii.-xii.), though this incorporates earlier prophecies ; also, conquest of Philistia by Tiglath-pileser.
731	252	Tiglath-pileser—Porus—reigns with Khinziros in Babylonia (Ptolemy's canon).†
728	255	1st y. of Tiglath-pileser in Babylon (Bab. Chron.).
727	256	18th y. of Tiglath-pileser ; his death ; accession of Shalmaneser IV. ; 12th y. of Ahaz ; accession of Hoshea (2 Ki. xvii. 1).‡
726	257	1st y. of Shalmaneser ; § 1st y. of Hoshea.
723	260	Close of 3rd y. of Hoshea ; 16th y. of Ahaz ; his death ; 1st y. of Hezekiah (2 Ki. xvi. 1, 2, xviii. 1, 2) ; the "burden" of Isa. xiv. 28.
722	261	1st y. of Hezekiah, as differently counted ; he begins to repair the temple (2 Chron. xxix. 8) ; 5th y. of Shalmaneser, and accession of Sargon, as commonly counted ; Sargon captures Samaria, and reimposes the tribute. Latest prophecies of HOSEA (xi.-xiv.).
721	262	1st y. of Sargon ; 1st y. of Merodach-baladan in Babylonia.
720	263	2nd y. of Sargon ; 4th y. of Hezekiah ; 7th y. of Hoshea ; Samaria, Damascus, Hamath, and others in alliance with Sebek of Egypt (So) against Assyria ; Sargon's victory at Raphia ; Samaria besieged (2 Ki. xvii. 1 sq., xviii. 9 sq., and records of Sargon).]

be regarded as uncertain, though there is a strong trend of opinion in favor of the idea that Nineveh perished about 608 B.C. (q. v.). Further, Nahum iii. 8-10 is regarded as an allusion to the sack of Thebes by Assur-bani-pal, 664 B.C., showing that Nahum prophesied later than that event.

\* This seems to be the campaign described in the two mutilated inscriptions given in Smith's *Assyrian Discoveries*, pages 284-86, cited from Layard, page 66, and Rawlinson iii. 10. 2. Tiglath-pileser captured Gaza and made conquests toward Egypt and in Arabia, as well as to the north. In both inscriptions he mentions Pekah, but what he says of him has been obliterated. He says that he appointed Hoshea to succeed Pekah.

† He had virtually been sovereign in Babylonia from the very beginning of his reign in Assyria.

‡ Possibly he had reigned as Assyrian governor from the time of his appointment at the death of Pekah, but now assumed the style of king, on learning of the death of Tiglath-pileser.

§ Shalmaneser was also king of Babylon, under the name of Ilušeus.

¶ One Assyrian inscription (Smith's *Assyrian Discoveries*, chap. xv., and Schrader) counts B.C. 719 as the first year of Sargon, instead of B.C. 721. On the face of it this appears to give the years 721 and 720 to Shalmaneser. Perhaps the same way of counting is followed in 2 Ki. xviii. 9, where the siege of Samaria is said to have begun in the reign of Shalmaneser. Against this is the statement of the Babylonian chronicle that Shalmaneser died in his 5th year ; but if the chronicler made a mistake here, it is a mistake easily accounted for.



B.C.	A.D.	
718	265	9th y. of Hoshea ; 6th y. of Hezekiah ; Samaria taken after 3 years' siege.* At various times from his 3rd to his 10th y. Sargon speaks of the deportation and importation of inhabitants for these regions, in some cases mentioning Samaria. Hezekiah rebels ; smites the Philistines (2 Ki. xviii. 7, 8).
711	272	11th y. of Sargon ; his expedition to Ashdod (Assyr. records and Isa. xx.).
710	273	14th y. of Hezekiah ; Sennacherib's first invasion of Judah (2 Ki. xviii. 13-16, Isa. xxxvi. 1) ; Hezekiah's illness (2 Ki. xx. 6) ; ambassadors of Merodach-baladan (2 Ki. xx. 12 sq.) ; Sargon subdues Merodach-baladan.
709	274	1st y. of Sargon as king of Babylon, being his 13th as king of Assyria.
705	278	17th y. of Sargon ; his death ; accession of Sennacherib ; Manasseh born (2 Ki. xxi. 1).
704	279	1st y. of Sennacherib.
701	282	Sennacherib's second invasion of Judah ; 4th y. of Sennacherib ; battle of Eltekeh (Assyr. records, 2 Ki. xviii. 17 sq., Isa. xxxvi. 2 sq.) ; 23rd y. of Hezekiah.
700	283	5th y. of Sennacherib ; 3rd y. of Bel-ibni of Babylon ; Sennacherib devastates Accad, and places his son Assur-nadin-suma on the throne at Babylon.
699	284	6th y. of Sennacherib ; 1st y. of Assur-nadin-suma ; Sennacherib operating in the Nipur mountains ; the Assyrian forces withdrawn from Palestine, so as to make the resumption of agriculture possible (2 Ki. xix. 29).
698	285	7th y. of Sennacherib ; he operates against Elam, and subdues a revolt in Babylonia.
697	286	8th y. of Sennacherib ; 3rd y. of Assur-nadin-suma ; Sennacherib operates against Elam ; is compelled by a terrible storm to return to Nineveh.
696	287	9th y. of Sennacherib ; he puts down a formidable revolt in Babylonia, Elam assisting the rebels.†

ISRAIAH. The bulk of his prophecies belong to Hezekiah's time.

\* Josephus says (*Ant.* IX. xiv. 1) that the capture was the 7th y. of Hezekiah. Perhaps this indicates that it occurred just at the close of the 6th and the beginning of the 7th—that is, as we now count, March, 717 B.C.

The date in the marginal Bibles is 721 B.C. This has misled scholars very generally into identifying this final capture with the capture by Sargon, B.C. 722. But this is untenable. As Sargon expressly tells us, that capture of Samaria was not final. It was before the entanglement with the Egyptian king, and not after.

It is possible to understand Isa. vii. 8 as affirming that when the year 65 arrives (for the construction of the numeral cf. Gen. xiv. 4, 5) Ephraim will be broken. Is it possible that the prophet means the year 265 of the disruption? His counting from that era is perhaps paralleled in 2 Chron. xv. 19, xvi. 1, and Ezek. iv. 5. His saying "sixty-five" for "two hundred sixty-five" is analogous to our own current usages, and to the Jewish distinction between their "great chronology" and "small chronology" (Mitchell's *Ges. Grammar*, sec. 5, note). The current explanation of this numeral is by noticing the fact that the 65th year from the time when the prophet spoke would fall within the reign of Esar-haddon, and then assuming that the political power of Samaria was not broken till then ; but this is hardly consistent with either the biblical or the Assyrian accounts.

Josephus says (*Ant.* X. ix. 7) that the carrying away of Judah, which he dates the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar, A.D. 396, was 180½ years after that of the ten tribes. This contradicts his own date, A.D. 241, for the deportation of the ten tribes, and exactly fits the date 265 A.D.

† These are the dates as given by Sennacherib. They are contradicted in some details, but in the main confirmed by other records of Sennacherib, and by the Babylonian Chronicle.

Jehovah's deliverance of Judah was not accomplished, as many have inferred from 2 Ki. xix. 35, by a sudden large destruction of Assyrians in Palestine, the night after the prophet gave his message. "That night" is the night when Jehovah executed judgment on Sennacherib, whether just after the prophet spoke or years later. The place of the judgment may have been Palestine, or may have been any other region of the earth. The blow of Jehovah's angel may have fallen in the form of a pestilence, or in that of a desert wind, or a mountain storm, or in some other form. That the actual rescue was to take two years appears from 2 Ki. xix. 29.

B.C.	A.D.	
695	288	29th y. of Hezekiah ; his death ; accession of Manasseh (2 Kl. xviii. 1, 2, xx. 21) ; 10th y. of Sennacherib.
694	289	1st y. of Manasseh ; 11th y. of Sennacherib ; 6th y. of Assur-nadin-suma ; the Elamites carried him captive and made Nergal-yuezib king at Babylon.
693	290	12th y. of Sennacherib ; he again conquers Babylon, and devastates Elam.
681	302	24th y. of Sennacherib ; slain by his son, the 24th day of the 10th month ; insurrection in Assyria till the 2nd day of the 12th month (Bab. Chron., cf. 2 Kl. xix. 37) ; nominal accession of Esar-haddon.
680	303	Actual accession of Esar-haddon, 8th day of 3rd month (Bab. Chron.) ; his 1st y. ; expedition to Chaldæa ; 1st y. of Esar-haddon as king of Babylon (15th y. of Manasseh). Early in his reign Esar-haddon operated against Sidon ; in undated inscriptions he claims Manasseh of Judah and all the neighboring kings as tributary. ISAIAH still living (Isa. xxxvii. 38, cf. 2 Chron. xxxii. 32) ; ? his martyrdom. (?)
676	307	5th y. of Esar-haddon ; Sidon finally subdued (Bab. Chron.).
675	308	6th y. of Esar-haddon ; campaign in Egypt (Bab. Chron.) ; Assur-bani-pal associated with him as king. (?)
674	309	7th y. of Esar-haddon ; campaign in Egypt ; the gods of Accad move from Elam to the city of Accad.
671	312	10th y. of Esar-haddon ; severe and decisive fighting in Egypt ; captivity of Manasseh (see B.C. 648). ?
668	315	13th y. of Esar-haddon ; his death ; accession of his two sons : Saul-suma-yukina in Babylon, and Assur-bani-pal in Assyria (Bab. Chron., which, however, gives but 12 years to Esar-haddon) ; the gods of Accad move from the city of Assur to Babylon ; expedition of Assur-bani-pal to Egypt ; tribute from Judah and 21 other kingdoms on the way ; he captures Thebes. Revolt in Egypt, headed by Tirhakah.
664	319	Tirhakah's death (Apis-stelæ, Schrader on Nah. iii. 8). Assur-bani-pal's second expedition ; submission of Egypt and Ethiopia ; sack of Thebes (Nah. iii. 8). ? His fifth expedition—sixth, according to some documents—campaign in Elam ; general rebellion, fomented by Saul-suma-yukina, and including the peoples of Syria and the seacoast.
648	335	20th y. of Saul-suma-yukina ; Assur-bani-pal's sixth—or seventh—expedition ; terrible siege of Babylon by him ; Saul-suma-yukina dies by fire ; Manasseh of Judah carried to Babylon by the captains of the king of Assyria (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11). ? * In his seventh and eighth expeditions Assur-bani-pal took vengeance on the allies of his brother, especially on Elam ; and in his ninth, his vengeance reached Arabia and the peoples of the seacoast. Manasseh's return and reformation (2 Chron. xxxiii. 13 sq.).
645	338	Josiah born (2 Kl. xxii. 1). NAHUM. (?) But see foot-note before B.C. 739.

The facts seem to be these. What Sennacherib proposed was the deportation of Judah (2 Kl. xviii. 31, 32). He was diverted from the attack on Jerusalem by the approach of Tirhakah (xix. 9). Then the news reached him of the uprisings in the east, and he was obliged to return to Nineveh, and was never able to renew his attempt to deport Judah, though when he returned to Nineveh he received a heavy fine from Hezekiah.

\* Or, Manasseh may have been carried to Babylon at any time during Esar-haddon's reign ; or in the time of Assur-bani-pal's ninth expedition, when he took vengeance on the peoples of the seacoast. But, probably, the larger part of Manasseh's reign—the bad part of it—was before he was carried away ; and, probably, he was not kept captive many years.

B.C.	A.D.I.	
640	343	55th y. of Manasseh ; his death ; accession of Amon (2 Ki. xxi. 1, 18).
639	344	1st y. of Amon.
638	345	2nd y. of Amon ; his death ; accession and 1st y. of Josiah (2 Ki. xxi. 19, 26).*
		ZEPHANIAH. (?)
632	351	Jehoiakim born (2 Ki. xxiii. 36).
631	352	8th y. of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3).
630	353	Jehoahaz born (2 Ki. xxiii. 31).
627	356	12th y. of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3) ; reform begun.
626	357	13th y. of Josiah ; JEREMIAH begins prophesying (Jer. i. 2, xxv. 3, 1) ; accession of Nabopolassar in Babylon.
625	358	1st y. of Nabopolassar.
621	362	18th y. of Josiah ; his great passover and reformation ; finding of the book of the law ; overthrow of the altar at Bethel (2 Ki. xxii. 3 sq., 2 Chron. xxxiv. 8 sq.)†
617	366	Zedekiah born (2 Ki. xxiv. 18).
615	368	Jehoiachin born (2 Ki. xxiv. 8).‡
608	375	31st y. of Josiah (2 Ki. xxii. 1) ; his death ;‡ Jehoahaz 3 months ; accession of Jehoiakim.
607	376	1st y. of Jehoiakim.
605	378	21st y. of Nabopolassar ; his death ; accession of Nebuchadnezzar ; Jehoiakim becomes his servant (2 Ki. xxiv. 1) ; Daniel and others carried into exile (Dan. i. 1) ; beginning of the 70 years of exile.
604	379	1st y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; 4th y. of Jehoiakim ; 23rd y. of the prophesying of Jeremiah (Jer. xxv. 1, 3, xlvi. 1, 2, Jos. <i>Ant.</i> X. vi. 1) ; Nebuchadnezzar wins the decisive battle of Carchemish ; BARUCH writes a book of JEREMIAH'S prophecies, and reads it publicly (Jer. xxxvi. 1 sq., xlv. 1 sq.).
603	380	5th y. of Jehoiakim ; Baruch again reads his book, which is destroyed by the king, and afterward rewritten (Jer. xxxvi.) ; Jehoiakim, having served Nebuchadnezzar 3 years, rebels (2 Ki. xxiv. 1, Jos. <i>Ant.</i> X. vi. 2) ; Daniel expounds Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan. ii. 1, i. 5, 18).
600	383	8th y. of Jehoiakim, following 4th y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; Jehoiakim, frightened back to allegiance, pays tribute two years, but revolts the third (Jos. <i>Ant.</i> X. vi. 1, and 1st sentence of 2).
598	385	7th y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; 3023 persons deported (Jer. lii. 28).
597	386	11th y. of Jehoiakim ; 8th y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; Jehoiakim slain ; short reign of Jehoiachin ; accession of Zedekiah ; the great deportation to Babylon (2 Ki. xxiv. 6-16, etc.). Jeremiah's letter (Jer. xxix.). His prophecy concerning Elam (xlix. 34-39).
593	390	4th y. of Zedekiah ; Hananiah's case (Jer. xxvii.-xxviii.) ; Zedekiah's special act

\* At this point there are no checking numbers, and so it would be possible to assign either a year more or a year less of actual time to the reign of Amon. I have, on the whole, preferred the mean, especially as it fits well with the long number at A. D. I. 362.

† Josephus says that this was 361 years after Jadon's prophecy of the overthrow of this altar (*Ant.* X. iv. 4). This exactly fits the present scheme of the chronology, and fits none of the others.

‡ Ten years later, according to 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9.

§ Josiah died by a wound received in battle with Necho of Egypt. Josephus says (*Ant.* X. v. 1) that Necho was on his way to fight the Medes and Babylonians, who had overthrown Assyria ; but according to 2 Ki. xxiii. 29, he was going against the king of Assyria

B.C.	A.Di.	
		of homage (Jer. li. 59) ; Jeremiah prophesying against Babylon (Jer. i. and li., especially li. 60) ; 5th y. of Jehoiachin's exile ; EZEKIEL i.-vii. (i. 2.)*
591	392	6th y. of Zedekiah, last half ; EZEKIEL viii.-xix. (viii. 1) ; Zedekiah's perjury and rebellion (Ezek. xvii. 12-21, cf. 2 Ki. and 2 Chron.).
590	393	7th y. of Zedekiah (Ezek. xx. 1).
588	395	9th y. of Zedekiah ; Jerusalem invested ; EZEKIEL xxiv., xxv.
587	396	10th y. of Zedekiah ; 18th y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; † 832 persons deported (Jer. lii. 29) ; ineffectual Egyptian interference (Jer. xxxvii.) ; Egypt denounced (Ezek. xxix.) ; fiery furnace (Sept. of Dan. iii. 1).
586	397	11th y. of Zedekiah ; 19th y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; Jerusalem taken and burned (2 Ki. xxv., etc.) ; Gedaliah governor ; flight into Egypt (Jer. xl.-xliv.) ; EZEKIEL xxvi.-xxviii., xxx., xxxi., xxxiii. 21-xxxvii.
582	401	23rd y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; 745 persons deported (Jer. lii. 30) ; Josephus says ( <i>Ant.</i> X. ix. 7) that Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt.
573	410	25th y. of "our exile" ; 14th y. after destruction of Jerusalem ; EZEKIEL's visions of the restored Israel (xl. 1).
570	413	27th of Zedekiah (Ezek. xxix. 17) ; Egypt promised to Nebuchadnezzar.
568	415	37th y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; he invades Egypt.
562	421	43rd y. of Nebuchadnezzar ; his death ; accession of Evil-merodach.
561	422	1st y. of Evil-merodach ; 37th y. of the exile of Jehoiachin ; just at the close of the year, Jehoiachin released and honored (2 Ki. xxv. 27-30, Jer. lii. 31-34). ‡
539	444	Accession year of Cyrus in Babylon.
538	445	1st y. of Cyrus ; proclamation of return.

\* The year of "our captivity" or the year of Jehoiachin's captivity is five times mentioned : 2 Ki. xxv. 27, Jer. lii. 31, and Ezek. i. 2, xxxiii. 21, xl. 1. In four of these instances, and therefore in the fifth also, the count is made from the 11th year of Jehoiakim, the year in which the exile of Jehoiachin began. But I assume that all the other numerals in Ezekiel count from the first year of Zedekiah. For instance, compare Ezek. xxiv. 1 with 2 Ki. xxv. 1, or Ezek. xxvi. 1 with 2 Ki. xxv. 2.

The "thirtieth year" of Ezek. i. 1 coincides with the thirtieth from Josiah's great reformation. The 390 of Ezek. iv. 5 coincides with the number of years from the disruption. Whether these coincidences are significant or not, it is not so easy to match them with a coincidence for the 40 of Ezek. iv. 6.

† Josephus not very consistently says that the destruction of Jerusalem occurred the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar. But he makes this the basis of certain long numbers that have no small importance. The destruction, let us remember, occurred in the middle of the year. Josephus says (*Ant.* X. ix. 7) it was 130½ years after the destruction of Samaria. Subtract 130½ from 395½, and we have 265 A.Di. for the destruction of Samaria. This is the date I have found for it above.

He says (*Ant.* X. viii. 5) that the temple was destroyed 470½ years after it was built. But he says that Solomon reigned 80 years (*Ant.* VIII. vii. 8), whence it follows that he reigned 76 years after founding the temple in his fourth year. Add 76 to 395½, and we have 471½, which fits the 470½ within one year.

Again he says that the monarchy of David's dynasty lasted 514½ years (*Ant.* X. viii. 4). Add the 40 years of David and the first 4 years of Solomon to the 470½, and we have the 514½.

To the 514½ add 18 years for the reign of Saul during the lifetime of Samuel (*Ant.* VI. xiv. 9), and we have the 532½ years (*Ant.* XI. iv. 8, some copies) spoken of by Josephus as the entire duration of the kingdom.

With this compare the notes at A.Di. 241, 265, 362, 390. In arguing from these "long numbers" to confirm my conclusions as to the chronology, I build nothing on any assumption that Josephus is trustworthy in these matters ; for the contexts of the passages cited abundantly prove that our present copies of Josephus are not trustworthy in their chronological data. Apparently he had access to some trustworthy numerals, and to some that were not trustworthy, and used them without discrimination. In these circumstances I allege nothing more than that the coincidences of these data among themselves, and their coincidences with data obtained from other sources, constitute evidence of no inconsiderable value in favor of the coinciding data.

‡ But both in Jeremiah and in Kings this is said to have occurred, apparently, in the accession year of Evil-merodach. Perhaps, therefore, we ought to date it a year earlier, so near the close of the 36th year of his exile that it is counted from the beginning of the 37th year. By our current style of counting, that would be just before Easter, B.C. 561.

## Section 4.

## REVOLT OF THE TEN TRIBES, AND DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM.

1 KINGS 12 : 1-20.

1 AND Rehoboam went to Shechem : for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him  
 2 king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it, (for he was yet in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt, and they sent and called him ;)   
 3 that Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam,   
 4 saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous : now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will   
 5 serve thee. And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me.   
 6 And the people departed. And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye   
 7 me to return answer to this people ? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will   
 8 be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that   
 9 stood before him. And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke that thy father   
 10 did put upon us lighter ? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us ; thus shalt thou speak unto them, My little finger is thicker   
 11 than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke : my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise   
 12 you with scorpions. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me   
 13 again the third day. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had   
 14 given him ; and spake to them after the

2 CHRONICLES 10 : 1-19.

1 AND Rehoboam went to Shechem : for all Israel were come to Shechem to make   
 2 him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it, (for he was in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of king Solomon,) that Jeroboam   
 3 returned out of Egypt. And they sent and called him ; and Jeroboam and all Israel came, and they spake to Rehoboam, saying,   
 4 Thy father made our yoke grievous : now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve   
 5 thee. And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people   
 6 departed. And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye me to return an-   
 7 swer to this people ? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for   
 8 ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him.   
 9 And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may return answer to this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke that thy father did put upon us   
 10 lighter ? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou say unto the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us ; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger is thicker than my father's   
 11 loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke : my father chastised you with whips,   
 12 but I will chastise you with scorpions. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade, say-   
 13 ing, Come to me again the third day. And the king answered them roughly ; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old   
 14 men, and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto :

counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke : my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. So the king hearkened not unto the people ; for it was a thing brought about of the LORD, that he might establish his word, which the LORD spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David ? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse : to your tents, O Israel : now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the levy ; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. And king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David, unto this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was returned, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel : there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. So the king hearkened not unto the people ; for it was brought about of God, that the LORD might establish his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat. And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David ? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse : every man to your tents, O Israel : now see to thine own house, David. So all Israel departed unto their tents. But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was over the levy ; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. And king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David, unto this day.

*Historic Outline.* After Moses and Joshua, for three hundred and fifty years God had maintained a special personal rule over the tribes that He had chosen as His people. During this period, as occasion demanded, from time to time He had raised up special deliverers, called Judges. Of these the number of recorded names is fifteen. Then, at the people's solicitation, God had given them, in Saul, the style of king *they* desired ; a man of kingly presence and strong character, a brave, sagacious leader, but ruled as were the people by a selfish worldly spirit. To him succeeded David, who was God's own appointee ; a complete warrior and organizer, always true to God's interests in his kingly administration, though sometimes false to his own through frailty of his passionate nature. Upon the death of Saul a spirit of hostility had arisen, between Judah and Benjamin on the south, and the other ten tribes of the north. Under the judicious, impartial and beneficent rule of David this hostile spirit wholly disappeared in a new feeling of national unity. But to sustain Solomon's more splendid and prosperous but self-seeking reign, many burdens had been laid upon the northern tribes. The old disaffection had sprung up again, and secretly extended among them all.

Now, at the critical moment of Solomon's death, and partly as a consequence of Rehoboam's infatuated folly, this disaffection breaks forth into successful revolt. And the kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon, that had lasted one hundred and twenty years, is dismembered into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Of these, the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes, continues two hundred and fifty-four years under nineteen or twenty kings of ten different families. Assyrian conquerors then (721 B.C.) carried away the ten tribes ; and, as a distinct people, they disappeared from history. The kingdom of Judah lasted three hundred and eighty-eight years under nineteen or twenty kings of the family of David. Removed (587 B.C.) to Babylon, after a captivity of seventy years they were restored in considerable numbers to their own land. This historic outline should be carefully fixed in mind as a preparation for the intelligent study of these pages. B.

The space of time from the separation of the two kingdoms to the completion of the captivity of Judah is about four centuries. These centuries constitute a period second in importance to none of equal length. They comprise the great development, the decadence and the fall of Assyria, the sudden growth of Media and Babylon, the Egyptian revival under the

Psammetichi, the most glorious time of the Phœnician cities, the rise of Sparta and Athens to pre-eminence in Greece, the foundation of Carthage and of Rome, and the spread of civilization by means of the Greek and Phœnician colonies, from the Palus Mæotis to the Pillars of Hercules. Moreover, they contain within them the transition time of most profane history, the space within which it passes from the dreamy cloud-land of myth and fable into the sober region of reality and fact, and assumes the character of authenticity and trustworthiness. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Phœnicia, Greece vie with each other in offering to us proofs that the Hebrew records, for this time, contain a true and authentic account of the fortunes of the race; and instead of finding merely a few points here and there to illustrate from profane sources, we shall now be able to produce confirmatory proof of almost every important event in the history. G. R.

In the later years of David's reign, when the consciousness and the consequences of the great sin of his life had, so to speak, paralyzed the strong hand which held the reins of government, we are led to see how, in the Providence of God, the possibility of a great military world-monarchy in Israel—such as those of heathen antiquity—was forever frustrated. Another era began with Solomon: that of peaceful development of the internal resources of the country; of rapid increase of prosperity; of spread of culture; and, through friendly intercourse with other nations, of introduction of foreign ideas and foreign civilization. When it is remembered that the building of the Temple preceded the legislation of Lycurgus in Sparta by about one hundred and twenty years, that of Solon in Athens by more than four hundred years, and the building of Rome by about two hundred and fifty years, it will be perceived that the kingdom of Solomon presented the dim possibility of the intellectual, if not the political empire of the world. But, in the Providence of God, any such prospect passed away, when, after only eighty years' duration, the Davidic kingdom was rent into two rival and hostile states. A. E.

The origin of this separation is declared to have been a Divine judgment on the house of David, in consequence of the idolatrous worship introduced by the foreign wives of Solomon, and criminally permitted or partaken of by that prince. Had this offence remained unpunished, so contagious an example would have probably infected the whole mass of the people, who would thus have irretrievably

sunk into idolatry and vice: and does it not appear probable, that so long as the whole nation continued united under one sovereign this danger might frequently recur? Does not this division of the people under *two* monarchs appear, even to our short-sighted views, not only a just punishment for the crimes of Solomon, but the most probable method of preventing that *universal* apostasy caused by similar misconduct in future, which might have entirely defeated the design of the Jewish dispensation? Thus we must consider this revolution in its first origin as a providential dispensation. Yet it was not brought about by any resistless operation of Divine power; human passions and human agency were, in appearance, its only effective cause. The imprudent and tyrannical answer of Rehoboam to the demands of the Jewish people for a redress of grievances was its immediate occasion; but when the king of Judah made preparations to reduce the revolted tribes the Deity interposed to prevent the miseries of civil war, and commanded by His prophet: "Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, for this thing is from me." Nor should it be forgotten that this schism and idolatry of the ten tribes gave occasion for the most signal displays of Divine power and the most emphatic denunciations and manifestations of Divine justice, in the correction and government of this perverse race and their guilty monarchs. The miraculous reproof and punishment of Jeroboam himself, the death of his favorite son, the utter destruction of the three royal houses of Jeroboam, of Baasha, and of Ahab, all foretold by the prophets, afforded awful examples of the Divine vengeance. Among these ten tribes, also, were exhibited the miracles of Elijah and Elisha; concerning them too and their kings were pronounced some of the most distinguished prophecies of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah; and finally, after a series of striking and instructive chastisements, God executed His final judgment on this deluded and corrupted race, for He "removed Israel out of His sight" (2 K. 17: 18). Nor were corresponding effects wanting from this schism on the remaining two tribes; for it proved the most powerful means of preserving in them whatever degree of attention to the Divine law subsisted among them. It made it the obvious political interest of the kings of Judah to adhere with strictness to the law of Moses, and to promote its observance among their subjects; a line of conduct which became the boasted distinction of these kings, and the popular topic by which they main-

tained their superiority over the kings of Israel. *Graves.*

The Books of Kings and Chronicles form the main source for the history of the kings of Israel and Judah. They require, however, to be supplemented, especially for the later kings, by a careful study of the prophetic Scriptures, particularly of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. Local coloring, the life and manners of the time, and the feelings of those contemporary with the events described, are derivable almost wholly from this latter source, which furnishes them often in tolerable abundance. G. R.—The history contained in the Kings and Chronicles is not, by any means, a mere civil history, for it keeps always in view its position and purport as a part of Holy Scripture, and therefore dismisses with brevity long reigns, and important wars and conquests, in order to give prominence to the moral lessons and admonitions of the time, and to the religious characteristics and tendencies of kings, nobles, priests and people. D. F.

The separate existence of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah is abundantly confirmed by the Assyrian inscriptions. Kings of each country occur in the accounts which the great Assyrian monarchs have left us of their conquests—the names being always capable of easy identification with those recorded in Scripture, and occurring in the chronological order which is there given. The Jewish monarch bears the title of “King of Judah,” while his Israelitish brother is designated after his capital city; which, though in the earlier times not called Samaria, is yet unmistakably indicated under the term *Beth-Khumri*, “the house or city of Omri,” that monarch having been the original founder of Samaria, according to Scripture. G. R.

Here, at the outset of the separate history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, it may be well to take a general view of the relation of these two divisions of the Jewish people to Jehovah, their King. That the sin of Israel was much deeper, and their apostasy from God much sooner and more fully developed than in the case of Judah, appears from the circumstance, that the Divine judgment in the banishment of the people from their land overtook Israel one hundred and twenty-three years earlier than Judah. Yet at first sight it seems almost strange that such should have been the case. Altogether, the period of the separate existence of the two kingdoms (to the deportation of the ten tribes under Shalmaneser, about

722 B.C.) extended over two hundred and fifty-three years. During that time, thirteen monarchs reigned over Judah, and twenty over Israel, besides two periods of anarchy in Israel. The religious history of the ten tribes during these two and a half centuries may be written in very brief compass. Of all the kings of Israel it is uniformly said, that they “walked in the ways of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat,” except of Ahab and his two sons (Ahaziah and Jehoram), under whose reigns the worship of Baal became the established religion of the country. It follows that there was not a single king in Israel who really served the Lord or worshipped in His Temple. On the other hand, there were at least *five* kings in Judah distinguished for their piety (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah), while of the other eight, *two* (Joash and Amaziah) continued for a considerable, and a *third* (Rehoboam) for a short period their profession of the religion of their fathers. Four of the other *five* kings acquired, indeed, a terrible notoriety for daring blasphemy. Abijam, the son and successor of Rehoboam, adopted all the practices of his father during the last fourteen years of that monarch’s reign. During the reign of Jehoram the worship of Baal was introduced into Judah; and we know with what terrible consistency it was continued under Ahaziah and Athaliah, the measure of iniquity being filled by Ahaz, who ascended the throne twenty years before the deportation of the ten tribes, when the doors of the Sanctuary were actually closed, and an idol-altar set up in the Temple court. But, despite all this, idolatry never struck its roots deeply among the people, and this for three reasons. There was, *first*, the continued influence for good of the Temple at Jerusalem; and in this we see at least one providential reason for the existence of a central Sanctuary, and for the stringency of the Law which confined all worship to its courts. *Secondly*, the idolatrous kings of Judah were always succeeded by monarchs distinguished for piety, who swept away the rites of their predecessors; while, *lastly*, and remarkably, the reign of the idolatrous kings was uniformly brief as compared with that of the God-fearing rulers. Thus, on a review of the whole period, we find that, of the two hundred and fifty-three years between the accession of Rehoboam and the deportation of the ten tribes, two hundred passed under the rule of monarchs who maintained the religion of Jehovah, while only during fifty-three years His worship was more or less discarded by the kings of Judah. A. E.



The kingdom of Judah was preserved from the defection of the other tribes, expressly for the sake of God's covenant with David, and to maintain His worship at its chosen seat; and the immediate consequence of Jeroboam's *religious* revolt was to drive all the priests and Levites to Jerusalem. With the line of David remained God's promise of a permanent kingdom, made doubly sure by its ultimate reference to the Messiah; in that family the crown was handed on, generally from father to son, while in Israel the dynasty of Jeroboam ended with his son; and there followed a series of murders and usurpations, amid which the longest dynasties, those of Omri and Jehu, only numbered four and five kings each. From the disruption to the epoch at which Ahaziah, king of Judah, and Jehoram, king of Israel, were killed at the same time by Jehu, a period of ninety years (B.C. 975-884), Judah had only six kings (though Ahaziah reigned but one year), while Israel had nine; and in the whole period of two hundred and fifty-five years, from the disruption to the captivity of Israel, twelve kings of Judah occupy the same space as nineteen kings of Israel—a striking indication of the greater stability of the former dynasty. The moral superiority is equally striking, not only in the preservation of the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem, while Israel was sunk in idolatry, but even on the comparatively weak ground of the personal character of the kings. It is true that the house of David was deeply corrupted, chiefly by its connection with the wicked house of Ahab; but it boasts the names of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, the godly Hezekiah, the penitent Manasseh, the pure Josiah; while not one of the kings of Israel is free from the blot of foul wickedness, for even the fierce zeal of Jehu had no purity of motive. The two kingdoms were equally distinguished in their final fate. The sentence of captivity was executed upon Israel about one hundred and thirty years sooner than on Judah; and while only a remnant of the ten tribes shared the restoration of Judah, the latter became once more a small but powerful nation, not free from the faults of their fathers, but worshipping God with a purity and serving Him with a heroic zeal unequalled since the days of Joshua, and preparing for the restoration of the true spiritual kingdom under the last great son of David. P. S.

In the kingdom of Israel we see a long succession of wicked kings; in that of Judah we find a few who were eminent for piety. In every page we behold the genuine character of

man; and through the whole history we see the faithfulness and unchangeableness of God, His holiness and justice, His mercy and forbearance. *Jos. Jones.*—The Bible history describes, in action and exhibition, the perfections of Jehovah, as fully as the proclamation in which He declares Himself to be long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and by no means clearing the guilty. It delineates the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart as forcibly and distinctly as the annunciations of the prophets, when they "cry aloud and spare not." In the narratives of Scripture the dependent state, the perverseness, and the folly of man, and the secret motives by which he is actuated, as well as the power, the wisdom, the justice, and the goodness of God in His providential government, and above all in redemption, are vividly depicted. There is not a battle fought by the Israelites, nor a change in the administration of their government, the account of which is not designed for our instruction. There is not an incident recorded as taking place in a private family that has not a significant meaning. . . . And the history invariably keeps in view the agency of God in every occurrence, in events the most minute as well as the most considerable; and thus it furnishes a perpetual comment on the sublime description of the apostle, when, penetrated with admiration of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, he exclaims, "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen." *Haldane.*

**1 K. 12: 1-5.** In the conference Jeroboam appeared as leader of the ten tribes. The son of Nebat, of the tribe of Ephraim, Solomon long before had appointed him as ruler over that tribe. An able and ambitious man, skilful and successful in the construction of various works, withal popular among his own and the other already disaffected tribes, he soon aspired to royal state. His aspirations were confirmed by the symbolic act and declaration of the prophet Ahijah, recorded in chap. 11: 29-39. His designs being discovered by Solomon, he fled to Egypt, where he remained until the king's death. At the call of the disaffected tribes upon the death of Solomon he came and acted as their spokesman in the conference with Rehoboam. And soon these tribes will elect and establish him as king over Israel.

**6-8.** *The wise counsel rejected.* The spirit of true worship or piety had almost died out of the land during the latter half of Solomon's

reign. Doubtless the charge which the ten tribes brought against Solomon (verse 4) was true. His selfish, lavish expenditure demanded the imposition of increasingly heavy taxes. These he would naturally exact in larger proportion from the more distant tribes. They received little or no direct benefit from the costly structures, cities and roads for commerce, upon which their tribute was expended. Naturally therefore, and not unreasonably, they asked for reduction of these onerous taxes. At first Rehoboam rightly seeks guidance from the experienced and trusted counsellors of Solomon his father. The advise him to comply with the people's request for help, and to turn away their wrath by gentle words. And no wiser, better counsel was ever given. No clearer, truer statement of a great principle bearing upon practical conduct was ever spoken. "Serve thou this people," they said, "by timely helpfulness in their needs, and speak kindly to them, so wilt thou make them willing servants and faithful subjects!" Helpful service and kindly dealing were essential conditions of a safe and successful rule, the real basis of a happy and useful kingship. And in nothing is the kingly and the Christ-like mind so much evinced as in costly personal service and kindly speech. Therefore He who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, declared that *whosoever will be chiefest shall be servant of all*. But Rehoboam "forsook the counsel of the old men" "that stood before Solomon his father." B.

This was the kernel of the old men's advice: "You are the father of your people. You will command them best by serving them, for thus you will command their hearts. Consult their interest; bear with their petulance; entertain their grievances; deal considerately and tenderly with their burdens." The young king could not appreciate this lofty ideal of sovereignty. That a man could serve and be a king, that he could be most absolutely a king through service, was incomprehensible to him. Vincent.

**8-11.** *The foolish counsel accepted.* He consults with "the young men which stood before him," who were his preferred counsellors. They urged him to threaten the people with yet severer exactions and harsher treatment, and to use only scornful and contemptuous words in his reply. The advice they gave indicated their character as selfish, heartless, and cruel. And that such men were his chosen and trusted associates, that such advice commended itself to his own haughty nature and accorded

with his own inclinations, shows that the young king was himself alike heartless and cruel. B.—It was the advice of youthful selfishness, conceit, inexperience and presumption. Its kernel was: "You have the power; use the power. Thus shalt thou say unto them, My father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." And he took this advice. Word for word, he spoke to the people after the counsel of the young men, abating not one cruel taunt, one brutal threat. He forsook the old men's counsel. There is nothing uncommon in that. Vincent.

**12-14.** In the final decision of Rehoboam we find no trace of counsel sought of Jehovah. He wilfully turns away from the God of his fathers and utterly disregards all just rights of the people. Acting upon the suggestions of his own proud and foolish heart, and of companions alike self-seeking and foolish, he rudely and scornfully denies the reasonable petition of the people, and declares his purpose to subject them to still greater tyranny and suffering. There is no instance in history wherein so vast and permanent issues have depended upon a single decision, as in this election of foolish counsellors and adoption of unworthy counsel by Solomon's most unwise son and successor. And yet what else could be expected of this son, neglected and uncounselled as he had been by Solomon, left to a natural unrestrained haughtiness and an unbalanced pride of power.

**15.** *God's part in this dismemberment of David's kingdom.* That "the cause was from the Lord," obviously does not mean that God put the fatal folly into Rehoboam's heart, or inspired his senseless utterance. It does not mean that God authorized or approved the rebellion of the ten tribes from the house of David. Nor did it imply any direct commission to Jeroboam, or endorsement of his new kingship over Israel. God had said that the kingdom of Solomon should be rent, and that Jeroboam should be king over the ten tribes. But concerning the manner in which His Word should be fulfilled, the *human motives and actions through which His purposes should be accomplished*, nothing is here asserted or implied that qualifies man's sole responsibility in the matter. As the fulfilment of God's purposes was not the motive, was not even in the thought, of the rebelling tribes and their leader, so it formed no possible excuse for their conduct. The simple key to any and every difficulty lies in the fact that God uses all human plans and acts, wise and unwise, good and evil, in the carrying out of His own only wise and good pur-

poses. That God does thus interpose even the heathen mind has discerned, as we learn from the oft-quoted proverb : " *Whom the gods would destroy they first infatuate.*" B.

I see Jeroboam's plot, the people's insolence, the young men's misadvice, the prince's unreasonable austerity, meeting together, through the wise providence of the Almighty, unwittingly to accomplish His most just decree. All these might have done otherwise, for any force that was offered to their will ; all would no more do otherwise, than if there had been no predetermination in heaven ; that God may be magnified in His wisdom and justice, while man wittingly perisheth in his folly. *Bp. H.*—A stormy scene of passion, without thought of God, rages below, and above sits the Lord, working His great purpose by men's sin. That Divine control does not in the least affect the freedom or the guilt of the actors. Rehoboam's disregard of the people's terms was " a thing brought about of the Lord," but it was Rehoboam's sin none the less. That which, looked at from the mere human side, is the sinful result of the free play of wrong motives, is, when regarded from the Divine side, the determinate counsel of God. The greatest crime in the world's history was at the same time the accomplishment of God's most merciful purpose. Calvary is the highest example of the truth, which embraces all lesser instances of the wrath of man, which He makes to praise Him and effect His deep designs. *A. M.*—Had Rehoboam followed the old men's counsel he could at least have said, " I have done my best in the fear of God." But by his folly he brought the whole responsibility of the fatal crisis upon his own shoulders. Jeroboam and the tent tribes wanted an excuse indeed, but Rehoboam gave them one gratuitously. It needed but this to kindle the spark of rebellion into a flame. *Vincent.*

**16, 17.** *Separation and final severance of Israel from Judah.* The proud contemptuous tone of Rehoboam prompts the same spirit in the answer of the people. In the identical words of the malcontents who followed Sheba in the time of David, they say in substance, " We owe nothing to David, and receive nothing from the son of Jesse. Henceforth we renounce all allegiance and connection with him and his house !" So slightly they refer to David ; and with the bold challenge, " See now to thine own house, David," they go homeward.

**19, 20.** Then Rehoboam consummates his impolitic folly by sending a messenger, proba-

bly with some offer of compromise, to the exasperated tribes. B.—But with the wrong-headedness which characterized all his proceedings at this period of his life, he selected for envoy one of the persons most obnoxious to the malcontents—no other than his father's chief director of the forced labors which were so unpopular—Adoram or Adoniram. The rebels seem to have considered that this was adding insult to injury ; and, without waiting to hear his message, they stoned him to death. *G. R.*—This would seem to have been done before his departure from Shechem. For the stoning of this man, Adoram, by the whole people terrified the king and led him to flee to Jerusalem. This act of Israel was their final severance from the house of David. B.

Judah remained firm in his allegiance to the house of David ; Benjamin, satisfied with the distinction accorded it by the emplacement of the capital within its borders, threw in its lot with Judah ; Levi, thoroughly content with its grand position at the head of the religion of the kingdom, gave its sympathies to the Davidic cause, and ultimately gravitated to the southern kingdom. But Reuben, which claimed the right of the first-born ; Ephraim, which had given to the nation Joshua, the conqueror, Deborah, the prophetess, and Samuel, the last and the greatest of the judges ; Manasseh, which shared largely in the glories of its brother tribe, Ephraim (*Gen. 48, 49 ; Deut. 33*) ; Zebulun, which " sucked of the abundance of the seas ;" Gad, which " dwelt as a lion ;" Dan, the " lion's whelp ;" Issachar, the " strong ass couching down between two burdens ;" Naphtali, the " hind let loose ;" and Asher, the dweller in the far north, threw off the Davidic yoke, declared themselves independent of Judah, and proclaimed their intention of placing themselves under a new king. *G. R.*

It was an act of rebellion against God, not justified by the alleged provocation nor by the harsh words of Rehoboam. The real ground was jealousy against the tribe of Judah, which God had chosen to distinguish in establishing the throne of David, and in selecting Jerusalem as the seat of government and worship for the nation. As rebellion against Him, their secession was punished by their whole subsequent history and final extinction as a separate people. Yet, let it be remembered, this dismemberment of David's kingdom was also the act of God in fulfillment of his frequent solemn warning to David and Solomon, and as a consequence of Solomon's persistent disregard of the Divine commandments. We may add, that in

the subsequent history of the two kingdoms can be traced God's fulfilled purpose in preserving true religion in the world, and preparing the way for the introduction of Christianity. For Israel acted as a bulwark to keep back from Judah the contagion of idolatry diffused by the adjacent nations. B.—To the worshippers at Jerusalem the early decline and fall of Israel was a solemn and impressive spectacle of judgment against idolatry. This prepared the hearts of Judah for the revivals under Hezekiah and Josiah, softened them into repentance during the Captivity, and strengthened them for their absolute renunciation of idolatry, when after seventy years they returned to Palestine to become the channel through which God's greatest gift was conveyed to mankind. *Bullock.*

#### INSTRUCTIVE AND HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS.

The rending of the kingdom was the punishment of sin, especially Solomon's sin of idolatry, which was closely connected with the extravagant expenditure which occasioned the separation. So the so-called natural consequences of transgression constitute its temporal punishment in part, and behind all these our eyes should be clear-sighted enough to behold the operative will of God. This one piercing beam of light, cast on that scene of insolence and rebellion, lights up all history, and gives the principle on which it must be interpreted, if it is not to be misread. Again, the punishment of sin, whether that of a community or of a single person, is sin. The separation was sin, on both sides; it led to much more. It was the consequence of previous departure. So ever the worst result of any sin is that it opens the door, like a thief who has crept in through a window, to a band of brethren. *A. M.*

While the sin of Solomon is visited upon his son in the division of the kingdom, God's promised mercy to David is manifested in the continuance of his family upon the throne of Judah. Very touching and instructive is the record of this mercy: "For David My servant's sake will I give unto the son of Solomon one tribe, that David My servant may have a light away before Me in Jerusalem." Herein impressively we learn the power with God that a truly consecrated man obtains, and the blessings he perpetuates; and the constancy of God to His covenant pledges of mercy.

In every position and relation of life, it is a *kingly spirit* that habitually heeds and practises the double counsel of these ancient sages: to

*serve and help, and to deal kindly in word, as in deed.* And in this helpful, gracious dealing, we find the secret of securing and retaining a beneficent power over others in every sphere. Kindly utterance added to personal ministry ever impart a healthful and blessed magnetism over all the lives with which they come into contact. Together they win and hold all hearts, and make all lives the more fruitful and happy. *B.*

Rehoboam's trouble was not that he did not *see* the right; it was that he *would not follow it.* The counsel of the young men pleased him better than his father's counsellors. His own pleasure was sweeter to him than the profit of his people, and they must be trampled down that he might be lifted up. And has it not been so all through? It is not that men do not *see* the right; it is that they do not design to follow it, and so dimness of perception of truth comes over them, and men *grow blind to the truth which they will not follow.* It is just what the Master said: "Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." *W. Newton.*

Counsel is good; any man that thinks he does not need it is a fool or worse. "Seest thou a man that is wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Counsel in order to be good must come from a reliable source, a source entitled to respect and confidence, where there is information, integrity, and honesty of purpose, where there is unselfish and unbiassed regard to truth and to our real good. Such counsel may not always be palatable, not such as we like or hope for, but in the end we shall either be thankful that we followed it or wish that we had.

When Rehoboam preferred the advice of the young men he took a step which he could never afterward retrace, whose mischief admitted of no remedy. Seventeen years he lived and reigned, but he did nothing toward retrieving his mistake. He could not get back his lost dominions, he could not recover his alienated people. He could never be king of Israel. Another bore that title. Jeroboam dwelt in Shechem, the beautiful home of his fathers, and from Bethel, almost in sight of his capital, the calf challenged its rival on Mount Zion, and all because of a determination formed perhaps in an instant, and of words which it took but a moment to utter. *Hallam.*

Rehoboam's evil career is a comment on Solomon's word: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools

shall be destroyed." The statement is strong. It asserts that association determines destiny. Other Scripture teaches the same. See Ps. 1; 1 Cor. 15:33. The popular proverb is profoundly true: "A man is known by the company he keeps." Only let us be sure and emphasize the last word, "the company he keeps." We keep only what we like. The social instinct which takes shape in *friendships* and *intimacies* furnishes an unerring index of character. Unerringly it draws like to like. The man who begins by walking in the counsel of the ungodly finds himself at home at last in the seat of the scornful. Rehoboam was unmade by his own folly, and his folly showed itself in nothing more than in the choice of his counselors. *Vincent*.—God serves his own wise and righteous purposes by the imprudences and iniquities of men, and snares sinners in the work of their own hands. They that lose the kingdom of heaven throw it away, as Rehoboam did his, by their own wilfulness and folly. H.

The wisest man had a fool for a son. Why? His mother was an idolatrous Ammonite; and the mother makes or mars the child. To her was built the Temple of Moloch, and there the

son doubtless was instructed in bloody and licentious rites. He grew effeminate in the softness of a harem. The earnest exhortations "to my son," written in the Proverbs, would have no influence on such a young man, under such a father's example, and himself leading such a life. *H. W. Warren*.

Again, we remind our readers that *this entire history* is a veritable *Gospel of Providence*. For our better understanding of the principles of God's dealings, He hath given us this record of His ways as made known unto Moses, and His acts as revealed unto the children of Israel. The events of the history only multiply illustrations of this great fact. B.—The Bible record of human history is as if a clock had a transparent face. Human historians see and write what the hands tell; the Bible shows the moving wheels, the hidden causes. God can see the hidden causes that will work out results a hundred years hence. He forces not human wills, but uses the result of those wills. The nation that will not serve Him shall perish. *H. W. Warren*.

*N. B.*—To avoid confusion and to obtain a clear and well-defined conception of the history of both kingdoms, we propose to take each one through its entire career, noting all prominent points of its connection with the other. As covering the shorter period we begin with the KINGDOM OF ISRAEL. B.

## Section 5.

### KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

#### REIGN OF JEROBOAM, THE FIRST KING, 23 YEARS.

#### Rehoboam and Abijah, in Judah.

*Capital Cities; Establishment of Idol-worship; Warning of a Prophet from Judah unheeded; Disobedience and Death of the Prophet; Sickness and Death of Jeroboam's Son; his Defeat by Abijah; his Evil Life, its Fruits and Lessons.*

1 KINGS 12:25-33; 13:1-34; 14:1-20.

19:25 THEN Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and dwelt therein; 26 and he went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall 27 the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they shall kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of 28 Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought 29 thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in

30 Dan. And this thing became a sin : for the people went *to worship* before the one, even unto  
 31 Dan. And he made houses of high places, and made priests from among all the people,  
 32 which were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on  
 the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he went up unto the  
 altar ; so did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made : and he placed in  
 33 Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made. And he went up unto the altar  
 which he had made in Beth-el on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month  
 which he had devised of his own heart : and he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and  
 went up unto the altar, to burn incense.

13 : 1 And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto  
 2 Beth-el : and Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the  
 altar by the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD : Behold, a child  
 shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name ; and upon thee shall he sacrifice the  
 priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall they burn upon  
 3 thee. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath  
 spoken : Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.  
 4 And it came to pass, when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried  
 against the altar in Beth-el, that Jeroboam put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay  
 hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not  
 5 draw it back again to him. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar,  
 6 according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. And the  
 king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the favour of the LORD thy God,  
 and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God intreated  
 7 the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before. And  
 the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give  
 8 thee a reward. And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine  
 9 house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place : for  
 so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Thou shalt eat no bread, nor drink  
 10 water, neither return by the way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned  
 not by the way that he came to Beth-el.  
 11 Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el ; and one of his sons came and told him all the  
 works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el : the words which he had spoken  
 12 unto the king, them also they told unto their father. And their father said unto them, What  
 way went he? Now his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from  
 13 Judah. And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass : and  
 14 he rode thereon. And he went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak :  
 and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am.  
 15 16 Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not  
 return with thee, nor go in with thee : neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in  
 17 this place : for it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink  
 18 water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. And he said unto him, I also  
 am a prophet as thou art ; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying,  
 Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But he*  
 19 *lied* unto him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.  
 20 And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the  
 21 prophet that brought him back : and he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah,  
 saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient unto the mouth of the  
 22 LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, but  
 camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of the which he said to thee,  
 Eat no bread, and drink no water ; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy  
 23 fathers. And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he sad-  
 24 dled for him the ass, *to wit*, for the prophet whom he had brought back. And when he was  
 gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him : and his carcase was cast in the way, and the  
 25 ass stood by it ; the lion also stood by the carcase. And, behold, men passed by, and saw  
 the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase : and they came and told it in  
 26 the city where the old prophet dwelt. And when the prophet that brought him back from the  
 way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the mouth of the  
 LORD : therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain  
 27 him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him. And he spake to his  
 28 sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled it. And he went and found his carcase  
 cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase : the lion had not eaten the  
 29 carcase, nor torn the ass. And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid  
 it upon the ass, and brought it back : and he came to the city of the old prophet, to mourn,  
 30 and to bury him. And he laid his carcase in his own grave ; and they mourned over him,  
 31 *saying*, Alas, my brother ! And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to  
 his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is  
 32 buried ; lay my bones beside his bones. For the saying which he cried by the word of the  
 LORD against the altar in Beth-el, and against all the houses of the high places which are in  
 the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.

83 After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again from among all the people priests of the high places : whosoever would, he consecrated him, that there might  
84 be priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

14 : 1 2 At that time Ahijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam : and get thee to Shiloh ; behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which spake concerning me that  
3 I should be king over this people. And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse  
4 (or bottle) of honey, and go to him : he shall tell thee what shall become of the child. And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah.  
5 Now Ahijah could not see ; for his eyes were set by reason of his age. And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to inquire of thee concerning her son ; for he is sick : thus and thus shalt thou say unto her : for it shall be, when she cometh in, that  
6 she shall feign herself to be another woman. And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam ; why  
7 feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel : Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the  
8 people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee : and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept  
9 my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes ; but hast done evil above all that were before thee, and hast gone and made  
10 thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back : therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from  
11 Jeroboam every man child, him that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel, and will utterly sweep away the house of Jeroboam, as a man sweepeth away dung, till it be all gone.  
12 Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat ; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat : for the LORD hath spoken it. Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine  
13 house : and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die. And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him ; for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave : because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam.  
14 Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day : but what ? even now. For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken  
15 in the water ; and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the River ; because they have made their Asherim, provoking  
16 the LORD to anger. And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he hath sinned, and wherewith he hath made Israel to sin. And Jeroboam's wife arose, and  
17 departed, and came to Tirzah : and as she came to the threshold of the house, the child died.  
18 And all Israel buried him, and mourned for him ; according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet. And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles  
19 of the kings of Israel. And the days which Jeroboam reigned were two and twenty years : and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

#### THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

The new kingdom was called " Israel ;" and, with the national name, it seemed, in many respects, the true representative of the nation. It included an overwhelming majority of the tribes. It possessed the chief portion of the territory. Yet Judah possessed Jerusalem, with its Temple, its Ark of the Covenant, and its God-appointed worship. In Judah, too, was the throne of David, and the line of succession from the monarch who had received God's promises in behalf of his posterity. To Judah, moreover, clung the true priesthood of Aaron and the tribe of Levi. And thus, when the new kingdom of Israel, setting up for itself, organized an independent and idolatrous worship, and then, notwithstanding the remonstrances of God-ordained prophets, went on from bad to worse, substituting at length the unmitigated idolatry of Baal-worship for the worship of God by images, it established its character as an apostate kingdom. About two hundred and fifty years this kingdom lasted ;

and it is especially worthy of note that very nearly contemporaneous with it—rising to view shortly after it rose and falling just before it fell—was the kingdom of Syria, having the city of Damascus as its capital, and a succession of Benhadads as its principal kings. Syria on the northeast and Judah on the south were the rivals of Israel ; and, among the three, alliances were frequently formed by some two against the third. Phœnicia, on the sea-coast to the northwest, was commonly friendly to Israel ; and King Ahab obtained thence his detestable wife Jezebel, who brought with her the worship of her national gods Baal and Astarte, and well-nigh succeeded in corrupting the whole kingdom with her idolatry. The new kingdom of Israel was characterized by frequent changes of its dynasty. N. C. B.—In this kingdom there was no conservative principle. A love of novelty and change, under the specious name of reform, was the chief characteristic of the powerful house of Joseph. The kingdom, originating in rebellion, was

ruled by a succession of adventurers, who built sumptuous palaces and selected pleasant residences to gratify their own tastes for luxury and show, without a thought of the public good. *J. L. Porter.*

The history of the kingdom of Israel is mainly the history of the tribe of Ephraim; and some of the prophets call attention to this fact by calling the kingdom not "Israel," or "Jacob," or even "Joseph," but simply "Ephraim." The kingdom of Israel had a grand opportunity of justifying the secession. It might resolutely have set to work to avoid and to remedy the grievous errors which had disfigured the latter part of the reign of Solomon. The fatal mistake consisted in supposing that these could be avoided by mere severance from the house of David, and that no remedy was needed. Had Jeroboam and his successors honestly labored to abolish idolatry, to moderate taxation, and to strengthen the frontier, they would have retained the alliance of the prophets, the most powerful moral force of the age, and would have won the respect and lasting affection of the tribes. But they cared for their own dynasty much more than for the true religion, and to surpass Judah much more than to put down and thrust back the heathen. Thus even in the first period (from Jeroboam to Ahab, B.C. 975-900), which is one of hostility between the kingdoms, although Israel gains considerable advantages over Judah, yet what advance is made is wholly in the southern kingdom, while the northern simply goes back. Jeroboam, in order to make the break with the capital of Judah as decided as possible, made a clean sweep of all that could remind his subjects of the glory of David and Solomon, and with it of a large portion of the existing civilization. Thus his kingdom was at once sent back to the rudeness of the age of Saul; and before long was plunged in the anarchy and consequent weakness which had distinguished the age of the Judges. Hence in the kingdom of Israel there seems to be nothing to compensate for the evil of division. For the evil of division in an empire is by no means necessarily unmixed. Sometimes the several portions develop all the more healthily for being independent, if only they have sufficient internal force and sufficient scope for action. The kingdom of Israel was deficient in both; and the force which it possessed was misdirected, so that what scope it had was thrown away. P. C.

*The history of the Northern kingdom, called, as the basis of the nation, the kingdom of Israel, or, after its chief tribe, that of Ephraim,*

comes chiefly under the consideration of biblical theology, as exhibiting in the conflict waged against the apostate realm by the *prophetic order* the powerful agency of the latter, and as manifesting in the whole course of the events which befell it the serious nature of *Divine retribution*. Nine dynasties, including nineteen kings (not reckoning Tibni), succeeded each other in the two centuries and a half during which the kingdom existed, and only two, those of Omri and Jehu, possessed the throne for any length of time. The history is full of conspiracies, regicides, and civil wars; it is a continuous testimony to the fact that when once the divinely appointed path is forsaken sin is ever producing fresh sin, and that the punishment of one crime is inflicted by another. O.

The kingdom of Israel lasted two hundred and fifty-four years, from B.C. 975 to B.C. 721, about two-thirds of the duration of its more compact neighbor, Judah. But it may be doubted whether the division into two kingdoms greatly shortened the independent existence of the Hebrew race, or interfered with the purposes which, it is thought, may be traced in the establishment of David's monarchy. The detailed history of the kingdom of Israel will be found under the names of its nineteen kings. A summary view may be taken in four periods: 1. B.C. 975-929. Jeroboam had not sufficient force of character in himself to make a lasting impression on his people. A king, but not a founder of a dynasty, he aimed at nothing beyond securing his present elevation. The army soon learned its power to dictate to the isolated monarch and disunited people. Baasha, in the midst of the army at Gibbethon, slew the son and successor of Jeroboam; Zimri, a captain of chariots, slew the son and successor of Baasha; Omri, the captain of the host, was chosen to punish Zimri; and after a civil war of four years he prevailed over Tibni, the choice of half the people. 2. B.C. 929-884. For forty-five years Israel was governed by the house of Omri. That sagacious king pitched on the strong hill of Samaria as the site of his capital. The princes of his house cultivated an alliance with the kings of Judah, which was cemented by the marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah. The adoption of Baal-worship led to a reaction in the nation, to the moral triumph of the prophets in the person of ELIJAH, and to the extinction of the house of Ahab in obedience to the bidding of ELISHA. 3. B.C. 884-772. Unparalleled triumphs, but deeper humiliation, awaited the kingdom of Israel under the dynasty of Jehu. Hazael, the ablest king of Da-



mascus, reduced Jehoahaz to the condition of a vassal, and triumphed for a time over both the disunited Hebrew kingdoms. Almost the first sign of the restoration of their strength was a war between them ; and Jehoash, the grandson of Jehu, entered Jerusalem as the conqueror of Amaziah. Jehoash also turned the tide of war against the Syrians ; and Jeroboam II., the most powerful of all the kings of Israel, captured Damascus, and recovered the whole ancient frontier from Hamath to the Dead Sea. This short-lived greatness expired with the last king of Jehu's line. 4. B.C. 772-721. Military violence, it would seem, broke off the hereditary succession after the obscure and probably convulsed reign of Zachariah. An unsuccessful usurper, Shallum, is followed by the cruel Menahem, who, being unable to make head against the first attack of Assyria under Pul, became the agent of that monarch for the oppressive taxation of his subjects. Yet his power at home was sufficient to insure for himself a ten years' reign, his son and successor, Pekahiah, being cut off after two years

by a bold usurper, Pekah. Abandoning the northern and trans-Jordanic regions to the encroaching power of Assyria under Tiglath-pileser, he was very near subjugating Judah, with the help of Damascus, now the coequal ally of Israel. But Assyria interposing summarily put an end to the independence of Damascus, and perhaps was the indirect cause of the assassination of the baffled Pekah. The irresolute Hoshea, the next and last usurper, became tributary to his invader, Shalmaneser, betrayed the Assyrian to the rival monarchy of Egypt, and was punished by the loss of his liberty, and by the capture, after a three years' siege, of his strong capital, Samaria. Some gleanings of the ten tribes remained in the land after so many years of religious decline, moral debasement, national degradation, anarchy, bloodshed, and deportation. Even these were gathered up by the conqueror and carried to Assyria, never again, as a distinct people, to occupy their portion of that goodly and pleasant land which their forefathers won under Joshua from the heathen. *Dic. B.*

There were four leading periods in the history of the kingdom of Israel : in the first, the most prominent king was Jeroboam ; in the second, Ahab ; in the third, Jehu ; and in the fourth, Pekah. During the first period, idolatry took root ; during the second, it was in full blow ; during the third, it was somewhat checked through the influence of the prophets ; and during the fourth, it produced its natural fruit, in the utter destruction of the kingdom.

LEADING FEATURE OF PERIODS.	DYNASTIES.	KINGS.	LENGTH OF REIGNS.	PROPHETS.	KINGS OF JUDAH.
I. Idolatry taking root— about 46 years..... }	1.	1 JEROBOAM I.	22 years.	Ahijah.	Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa.
		2 Nadab.	2 ...		Asa.
		3 Baasha.	24 ...	Jehu.	Asa.
		4 Elah.	2 ...		Asa.
		5 Zimri.	7 days.		Asa.
II. Idolatry rampant— about 45 years..... }	6.	6 Omri.	12 years.		Asa.
		7 AHAB.	22 ...	Elijah—Micaiah.	Asa and Jehoshaphat.
		8 Ahaziah.	2 ...	Elisha.	Jehoshaphat.
		9 Jehoram.	12 ...		Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah.
III. Idolatry slightly checked—about 112 years..... }	10.	10 JEHU.	28 ...		Joash.
		11 Jehoahaz.	17 ...		Joash.
		12 Joash.	16 ...	Jonah.	Joash and Amaziah.
		13 Jeroboam II.	41 ...	Hoea and Amos.	Amaziah.
IV. Idolatry terminating in ruin, including interregnums—about 51 years... }	14.	14 Zachariah.	6 months.		Uzziah.
		15 Shallum.	1 ...		Uzziah.
		16 Menahem.	10 years.		Uzziah.
		17 Pekahiah.	2 ...		Uzziah.
		18 PEKAH.	20 ...	Oded.	Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz.
	19.	19 Hoshea.	9 ...		Ahaz and Hezekiah.

W. G. B.

**25. Jeroboam.** He was the son of Nebat, of the tribe of Ephraim. Solomon, long before, had appointed him as overseer of that tribe. An able and ambitious man, skilful and successful in the construction of various works, withal popular among his own and the other already disaffected tribes, he soon aspired to royal state. His aspirations were confirmed by the symbolic act and declaration of the

prophet Ahijah, recorded in 1 K. 11 : 29-39. His designs being discovered by Solomon, he fled to Egypt, where he remained until the king's death. At the call of the disaffected tribes upon the death of Solomon, he came, and acted as their spokesman in their conference with Rehoboam. And now, these tribes elect and establish him as king over Israel. B.

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat and Zeruah, was

"an Ephrathite (or Ephraimite) of Zereda" (1 K. 11 : 26), and was born a subject of King Solomon. Nebat, Jeroboam's father, seems to have died while Jeroboam was still a child, and he was brought up by his mother, "a widow woman," of whom nothing more is told us. He was among the men of Ephraim impressed by Solomon to aid in constructing the fortifications by which he was seeking to render Jerusalem an impregnable fortress. On one occasion, when Solomon was inspecting the progress of the fortification of Millo, which was situated between the Temple hill and the modern Zion, he specially attracted the attention of the monarch, who, noting his vigor and activity, promoted him to the position of head-overseer over the services due to the crown from the house of Joseph. We know nothing of Jeroboam's life between his promotion by Solomon and his flight into Egypt, except that, apparently without any scheming of his own, he was the subject of a prophetic announcement, which provoked the anger of Solomon, and led him to seek the life of his too distinguished servant and subject (1 K. 11 : 40). Occupied in observing Egyptian institutions, and in obtaining influence over the Egyptian monarch, Jeroboam passed some years. The time for a fresh movement came only when news reached Egypt of the death of Solomon, and simultaneously of a desire on the part of his friends in Palestine that Jeroboam should return to his native land, and be ready at hand in case the course of events should be such as to call for his intervention. Jeroboam responded to the call. When the rebellion broke out the ten tribes in a formal assembly (verse 20) made Jeroboam their king. The sovereignty over Israel, as distinct from Judah, passed once more to Ephraim, and the blessing of Moses upon Joseph (De. 33 : 13-17) seemed to obtain a fresh accomplishment. G. R.

The fact may be noted here, in passing, that immediately upon the revolt of the ten tribes, Rehoboam made great preparations to enforce their return to allegiance. But by the prophet Shemaiah, God forbade the gathered host of Judah to fight against their brethren of Israel. *For this thing is from me*, He said. And the king and people instantly obeyed "the word of the Lord." B.

*Jeroboam rebuilds and fortifies a capital on either side of Jordan.* This was his first scheme to establish his power. As the seat and centre of his influence among the tribes west of the Jordan, he builds Shechem in the territory of Ephraim. A corresponding centre of power

among the Eastern tribes he establishes at Penuel in the tribe of Gad. This double capital also afforded a place of retreat and rallying point in the event of defeat on either side of Jordan. In this scheme there was forethought and shrewdness, and no evil. B.—He enlarged and beautified both Shechem and Penuel for his own residence, either out of love for variety and grandeur, the very fault upon which he was wont to raise his insinuations against his master Solomon; or else to the end that, by fortifying these two places, one in the east and the other in the west part of his dominions, he might keep his subjects in better control. *Pyle.*—Shechem was the first capital of the new kingdom, venerable for its traditions, and beautiful in its situation. Subsequently Tirzah became the royal residence, if not the capital, of Jeroboam (14 : 17) and of his successors. Samaria, uniting in itself the qualities of beauty and fertility, and a commanding position, was chosen by Omri (16 : 24), and remained the capital of the kingdom, until it had given the last proof of its strength by sustaining for three years the onset of the hosts of Assyria. Jezreel was probably only a royal residence of some of the Israelitish kings. *Dic. B.*

**26.** *His natural but sinful distrust respecting the continuance of his kingdom.* The thought and fear of his heart was that a revived spirit of worship, in connection with the Temple and its sacrifices, might reverse the present current of hostile feeling, and win the tribes back again to the family of David. This thought and fear were both natural. But his actual distrust on this account was wholly sinful, and the root of all his subsequent fearful iniquity. For God had first singled him out, placed him on the throne, prevented Rehoboam's intended and probably successful attack, promised him a secure reign and the permanent establishment of his dynasty over Israel, upon the single condition of an obedient and upright rule. The same promises, conditioned upon the same regard to God's mandates, that had been made to Saul, to David, and to Solomon, were solemnly pledged to Jeroboam. Therefore his *distrust* was his sin. It was distrust, not of Judah, not directly of Israel, but of God. He disbelieves God's promises, counts Him false and impotent, and with an utterly self-dependent spirit undertakes to secure his own power, as if there were no Jehovah in Israel. B.—He had been appointed king under the Divine sanction. He held his crown under the condition of obedience; and on that condition the continuance of

the crown to his house was pledged to him. Nothing was wanted on his part but unreserved faith in that promise. If Jeroboam had that faith, he would have been free from any anxiety on the subject; he would have felt that it was safer to incur an apparent danger in the career of duty and right-doing, than to seek exemption from it by unlawful doings and tortuous policy. The Lord had given him every reason to trust in the sufficiency of His protection, when He had compelled King Rehoboam to dismiss the forces with which he was prepared to fall upon him in his comparatively helpless condition. If it be asked *how* he was to be secured from the danger which stood so distinctly before him, we can only answer, "We do not know." Jeroboam had no need to know. God knew; and it was his clear course to do right, trusting all the rest to God. *Kitto*.

27. Some plan had to be devised whereby the tendency to resort to Jerusalem for purposes of worship should be checked, and the subjects of the northern kingdom should find their religious aspirations met and satisfied within their own borders. It was with these objects in view that Jeroboam "resolved on creating two new seats of the national worship, which should rival the great Temple of the rival dynasty." He fixed on Dan and Bethel as his two holy sites—on Bethel as possessing the prestige of an ancient patriarchal sanctuary, revered from a most remote antiquity, and as convenient for his southern subjects; on Dan, as suitable for his subjects in the north. At both places he erected sacred buildings of some architectural pretensions, rivals to the Temple on Mount Zion, and at both he established a ritual and ceremonies, designed as substitutes for the ritual and ceremonies which David and Solomon had under Divine guidance instituted and established at Jerusalem. He placed in his sanctuaries of Dan and Bethel two golden images of bull-calves, as symbols of the Divine Presence, which watched over the land from one extremity to the other. These images very soon became the objects of an idolatrous worship; the creature superseded the creator in men's thoughts; and, while bowing down to "the calves of Beth-aven" (Hos. 10 : 5), Israel "forgot his Maker" (8 : 14). G. R.

God's prophet, who had rent Jeroboam's garment into twelve pieces, and had given ten of them to him in token of his sharing the ten tribes, with the same breath also told him that the cause of this distraction was their idolatry: yet now will he institute an idolatrous service,

for the holding together of them whom their idolatry had rent from their true sovereign to him. He says not, "God hath promised me this kingdom; God hath conferred it; God shall find means to maintain His own act: I will obey Him; let Him dispose of me: the God of Israel is wise and powerful enough to fetch about His own designs;" but, as if the devices of men were stronger than God's providence and ordination, he will be working out his own ends by profane policies. *Bp. H.*

28-33. His impious scheme, its evil aggravated and broadened by every detail, and its successful execution. He shows consummate forethought and skill in his vast, radical and perpetuated iniquity. Like himself alone in all history, sacred and secular, in its planning and perfection he manifests a Satanic coolness of deliberation, an utter selfish recklessness of consequences, and a daring defiance of God. For, be it noted, the heart of his scheme, the subject-matter of his iniquity, turns upon the vital interest and supreme concern of man's accountable life, *the worship and service of God*. He, an Israelite, not an Egyptian or blinded heathen, dares to be the first knowingly to introduce a counterfeit system of worship in place of the true. Directly in face of the true, established and maintained by God himself with amazing splendor of miracle, he dares take the very details prescribed by God, and pervert them to the uses of a blasphemous worship. Two centres of worship he establishes, with many altars for sacrifice. His purpose is partly to divert the people from the place so long associated with the gathering of all the tribes thrice a year for Jehovah's worship, partly to detach them from the old memories of Jerusalem as the centre of historic significance during the wondrous period of the nation's imperial greatness, and partly that those who still cherished the instinct or habit of worship might be spared the toil and expense of a long journey. For these reasons, to break up the force of past associations and to make it easier for the people to gratify their religious instincts, and at the same time to establish new foundations and bonds of interest, Jeroboam shrewdly places these two centres of worship at either limit of the land, at Bethel and Dan. In each centre he sets up a golden calf, in place of the shining symbol of the Divine Presence. By the very image erected in the wilderness, and in the same spirit of *turning away* from God, nay, of *supplanting Him*, which God had then so fearfully punished, he now defies God and prepares for the return of Divine judgments. A

priesthood, too, for his temples and his image gods, *he* impiously *selects* out of every tribe and from all classes of the people; after casting out God's ministers, the sons of Levi, from his territory. Further, "in his own heart he devised" a change in the time (which God had solemnly designated) of the autumn festival of ingathering. And as the crowning act of his bold impiety, he introduced this blasphemous worship by himself offering sacrifice and burning incense before "the calves that he had made." All this was deliberate, daring defiance of Jehovah. This complete organization of idolatrous worship, this direct *substitution of a counterfeit system for the true*, Jeroboam undertook in the face of his own yet existing belief in the God of Israel, in bold disregard of God's explicit commands, in impious scorn of His specific warnings. And the Divine punishment upon his family was meted, in its terribleness, to the enormity of his crime.

But great as was his sin in itself, and grievous as were its consequences to himself and his house, it was vastly greater and more grievous in its effects upon the people of Israel, and its ultimate bearing upon their sad history. *He made Israel to sin*, is the fearful record of almost every after reference to Jeroboam. The point of this reference is twofold: the *breadth* of the evil he wrought in leading to sin and destruction a great people; and the character of the people so deluded and destroyed, the chosen people of God. Simply with the small, selfish aim of making sure his own kingly power, this bold, bad man planned and persistently executed the utter overthrow and destruction of a nation signally distinguished by God's choice and blessing. For this end he perverted the moral life of the people by giving it false direction and tone. By his studied imitation of God's appointed worship he diverted the feeble current of their religious life from its true source and its only vital channels. By the pretence of worshipping Jehovah under the form of an image, he first effectually neutralized their small remnant of faith, and then easily annihilated it. By such impious mockery and reversal of the Divine institutes of religion and law, he severed Israel from Judah and from God. He introduced idolatrous principles and practices which were soon developed into every form and measure of iniquity. So Jeroboam *made Israel to sin*, and so prepared he the way for the utter ruin and extinction of the ten tribes.

To himself the result was: the loss of his favorite son, defeat by Judah and loss of con-

siderable territory, a foreknowledge of the slaughter of his entire family soon after his own death, a keen sense of the failure of his selfish plans, and a terrible foreboding of certain judgment unto doom. And concerning all these events abundant and kindly warning was directly given him, with ample opportunities for change of purpose, if he would. To realize this wondrous patience and mercy of God in the case of Jeroboam, and of every other like ingrate against Him, we have but thoughtfully to *read the record*. To learn how this man was dealt with through his prolonged life of evil, ponder the thrilling incidents of the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters following. These will show how well he knew that he had perverted every blessing, used every endowment and trust for evil, and so forfeited God's every promise and incurred His every threatening. And the history declares that two years after his remorseful death, his reigning son and all that remained of his house were ruthlessly slain, their bodies dishonored and destroyed without burial. B.

**33.** The worship at Bethel was inaugurated by a great festival, in which Jeroboam was as much the central and conspicuous figure as was Solomon at the dedication of the Temple on Moriah. The prophet Amos (5 : 21-23) describes the worship in terms which suggest an imposing and gorgeous ritual; mentioning feasts and solemn assemblies and various offerings, and the noise of songs and the melody of viols. From the prevalence of idolatry at Bethel, changing its former hallowed character, the prophets substituted for its old and honored name that of Beth-aven, or "house of idols," which before had been borne by a neighboring locality (Hos. 10 : 5). During the reign in Israel of the house of Ahab, the worship of Baal superseded the calf-worship to such an extent that Bethel became a residence of the sons of the prophets, and the great Elijah passed among them, on his way to Jericho and the Jordan, when he was about to be translated. On the restoration of the calf-worship by Jehu, Bethel became more unhappily renowned than ever; the worship receiving that development of splendor and that accompaniment of royal, luxurious life which prompted the descriptions and characterized the denunciations of the prophets (Amos 2-6). The fall of the northern kingdom was, of course, the fall of Bethel; yet not until the time of King Josiah was the presence of the old sanctuary relieved of the defilements of idolatry. N. C. B.

**Chap. 13: 1-10.** *The man of God from Judah: his prophecy concerning Jeroboam's altar in Bethel; his sign fulfilled; Jeroboam's withered hand restored at his prayer; his refusal of refreshment and reward, and his departure homeward.*

A more daring attempt against that God-ordained symbolical religion, the maintenance of which was the ultimate reason for Israel's call and existence—so to speak, Israel's very *raison d'être*—could not be conceived. It was not only an act of gross disobedience, but, as the sacred text repeatedly notes, a system devised out of Jeroboam's own heart, when every religious institution in Israel had been God-appointed, symbolical, and forming a unity of which no part could be touched without impairing the whole. It was a movement which, if we may venture so to say, called for immediate and unmistakable interposition from on high. Here, then, if anywhere, we may look for the miraculous, and that in its most startling manifestation. Nor was it long deferred. A. E.

1. If Israel afford not a bold reprover of Jeroboam, Judah shall. When the king of Israel is in all the height, both of his state and superstition, honoring his solemn day with his richest devotion, steps forth a prophet of God and interrupts that glorious service with a loud inclamation of judgment. *Bp. H.*

**2. Behold, a child shall be born, Josiah by name.** This is one of the most remarkable prophecies that we have in Scripture. It foretells an action that exactly came to pass above three hundred years afterward. It describes the circumstances of the action, and specifies the name of the person that was to do it; and, therefore, every Jew who lived in the time of its accomplishment must have been convinced of the Divine authority of a religion founded on such prophecies as this, since none but God could foresee, and consequently none but God could foretell, events at a distance. *Stackhouse.*—It is worthy of note how completely this brief protest proclaimed to Jeroboam the utter and shameful overthrow, both of his political and religious systems. A child of the rival house of David should stand where *he* then stood, his successors extinct or powerless to prevent him, and should cover this new cultus with disgrace and contempt. The man of God, he must have felt, has proclaimed in few words the fall of his dynasty, the triumph of his rival, and the failure of all his schemes. *Pul. Com.*

**2, 3.** He that knows what names we shall have before we or the world have a being, doth not often reveal this piece of His knowledge to

His creature: here He doth; naming the man that should be three hundred years after; for more assurance of the event, that Israel may say, "This man speaks from a God who knows what shall be." There cannot be a more sure evidence of a true Godhead than the foreknowledge of those things whose causes have yet no hope of being. But because the proof of this prediction was no more certain than remote, a present demonstration shall convince the future: "The altar shall rend in pieces, the ashes shall be scattered." What are some centuries of years to the Ancient of Days? How slow, and yet how sure, is the pace of God's revenge! It is not in the power of time to frustrate God's determinations. There is no *less* justice nor severity in a delayed punishment. *Bp. H.*

**4. He put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him.** Jeroboam was not content with his invasion of the ministerial function; but while he was busy in his work, and a prophet, immediately sent by God, declared against his idolatry, he endeavors to seize upon and commit him. Thus we have him completing his sin, and persecuting the true prophets, as well as ordaining false. But it was a natural transition; and no way wonderful to see him, who stood affronting God with false incense in the right hand, persecuting with the left; and abetting the idolatry of one arm with the violence of the other. *South.*

**4-6.** The arm outstretched in eager, wrathful command to arrest the man of God is withered in the very attitude. It was the emblem of his house and of his people; they were withered in the attitude of rebellion against God. *The prophet* needed none to shield him. God protects all those who serve Him. *Jeroboam* turns from idol and altar and priests, and requests the prophet's intercession with Jehovah. *His arm is restored at the prophet's request*, and he thus bears in his person another token that the word he has heard is from God. It is the story of God's contest with darkness and wrong to-day. *Pul. Com.*

**And the man of God besought the Lord.** In the prophet's ready intercession for Jeroboam we see the spirit of a true "man of God;" and how very different it is from that of the wicked, or the men of the world. A good man is kinder to his enemy than bad men are to their friends. He prays for his persecu-

tor, and entreats for the hand that was stretched out for his ruin. *Wogan.*

**11-32.** *The disobedience and death of the man of God.* The seduction of the man of God, who has borne such fearless witness against Jeroboam's ecclesiastical policy, and his tragical end, are now narrated, partly because of the deep impression the story made at the time, but principally because these events were in themselves an eloquent testimony against the worship of the calves and the whole ecclesiastical policy of Jeroboam, and a solemn warning for all time against any, the slightest, departure from the commandments of God. The very unfaithfulness of this accredited messenger of the Most High, and the instant punishment it provoked, became part of the Divine protest against the new régime, against the unfaithfulness of Israel; while the remarkable manner in which these occurrences were recalled to the nation's memory in the reign of Josiah (2 K. 23 : 17, 18) made it impossible for the historian of the theocracy to pass them over without notice. *Pal. Com.*

So far this prophet is true to his commission, and all has passed off well. The moral trial under which he fell now opens—on this wise: There lived an old prophet at Bethel (was he ever a good man?) whose sons seem to have witnessed the scene at the Bethel altar. Returning home they rehearse the story to their father. Forthwith he orders his ass saddled, pursues and overtakes the old prophet of Judah, and invites him to his own home to eat bread. The prophet answers, "No; my orders explicitly forbid it." "But," rejoins the old man of Bethel, "I am a prophet as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, 'Bring him back with thee into thine house that he may eat bread and drink water.'" "But" (adds the record) "he lied unto him." This was the point of stern temptation. He is weary, we may presume, and hungry; so, with quite too little thought, he concludes that, perhaps, the Lord had changed His mind and given His consent that His prophet might take some refreshment even in this wicked Bethel. While they sat at the table a message really from the Lord (not a lie as the former) came to this Bethel prophet for his guest: "Thou hast disobeyed the word of the Lord to thee; thy carcass shall never go to the grave of thy fathers." The prophet of Judah started for his home; a lion met him in the way and slew him.

These are the staple facts of the record: what is their explanation, and what are the lessons they were intended to teach? An era of pro-

phetic missions to the ten tribes in revolt was now opening. The reception given to this prophet from Judah by Jeroboam was quite in point to show how delicate and critical such prophetic missions were likely to be, and how vital to their success it was that the prophets should not only understand their messages, but have supreme, unlimited confidence that the messages given them were really from God. For all along through this era of prophetic missions in Israel the devil would be working his system of false, lying prophets to counteract as best he could the influence of God's true prophets. It was vital, therefore, to forewarn God's prophets to be on their guard against the devil's prophets and against his lies. Jeremiah had this fearful battle to fight to the bitter end. No prophet whose history is known to us came into contact with false prophets so often and so fiercely as he. Such a case as this in 1 Kings 13 finds a place naturally, therefore, in this history, assuming it to have been written by Jeremiah. As to the moral character of this old prophet of Bethel, it is not perhaps competent for us to pass upon it absolutely. The only point of difficulty is this: how, if he were a prophet of God, he could lie so to the prophet of Judah, and, on the other hand, how, if he were a prophet of the devil, the Lord should have spoken through his lips there at the table, dining with his guest. Perhaps it may relieve us on either horn of this dilemma if we consider, (a) That a man, normally good, may sometimes sin—as in this case, may be left of God to lie; and (b) that a bad man may be used of God, as Balaam was, to make prophetic communications, though only in rare, exceptional cases. Recurring to the moral purpose of God in permitting such a trial to come upon one of his prophets and really seduce him into sin, to his sad but exemplary death, we may suggest that it was supplemented not long after by the case of Jonah, which, being put on permanent record by his own pen, bears a similar warning to all prophets of the Lord to execute with unswerving fidelity their Divine commission. These prophets were human; only mere men of flesh and blood, and accessible, therefore, to those various temptations which more or less encompass all the saints of God in their earthly life. The solemn functions of the prophet brought his soul into peculiarly near relations to the Great God; but even this did not lift him above all approaches of temptation, did not quench utterly those susceptibilities upon which temptation works—to the result sometimes of sorrowful sinning. C.

God had given His messenger express command, neither to eat bread nor to drink water in that place, nor even to return by the way that he had come. These directions had, of course, a much deeper and symbolical meaning. They indicated that Bethel lay under the ban; that no fellowship of any kind was to be held with it; and that even the way by which the messenger of God had come was to be regarded as consecrated, and not to be retraced. In the discharge of the commission entrusted to him, the "man of God," who had "come in the word of Jehovah," was to consider himself as an impersonal being—till he was beyond the place to which and the road by which he had been sent. A. E.—The beguiled prophet, being himself in the direct receipt of Divine intimations, had no right to act upon a contradiction to the mandate imparted to himself on any less direct authority than that from which he had received it; and his easy credulity had brought discredit upon the high mission entrusted to him, and marred much of the good effect it might have produced upon the minds of the king and people. For this he must die, while the guiltier man incurs no punishment, even as a soldier on high and responsible duty suffers death for offences which would scarcely incur blame at another time, and in other men. It is the responsibility, the breach of duty, less than the act, which constitutes the crime. *Kitto.*

The violation of the least charge of a God is mortal. No pretences can warrant the transgression of a Divine command. A word from God is pleaded on both sides: the one was received immediately from God; the other related mediately by man: one, the prophet was sure of; the other was questionable. A sure word of God may not be left for an uncertain. An express charge of the Almighty admitteth not of any check. Doubtless this prophet was a man of great holiness, of singular fidelity, else he durst not have been God's herald to carry a message of defiance to Jeroboam, king of Israel, in the midst of his royal magnificence; yet now for varying from but a circumstance of God's command, though upon the suggestion of a Divine warrant, is given for a prey to the lion. I cannot think but this prophet died in the favor of God, though by the teeth of the lion. His life was forfeited for example; his soul was safe. Violent events do not always argue the anger of God. Even death itself is to his servants a fatherly castigation. But oh, the unsearchable ways of the Almighty! the man of God sins and dies speedily; the

lying prophet that seduced him survives: yea, wicked Jeroboam enjoys his idolatry and treads upon the grave of his reprove. There is neither favor in the delay of stripes nor displeasure in the haste: rather, whom God loves he chastises, as sharply so speedily, while the rest prosper to condemnation. *Bp. H.*

**26-32.** When the rumor reached the "old prophet," he immediately understood the meaning of all. Riding to the spot, he reverently carried home with him the dead body of the "man of God," mourned over, and buried him in his own sepulchre, marking the place by a monumental pillar to distinguish this from other tombs, and to keep the event in perpetual remembrance. But to his sons he gave solemn direction to lay him in the same tomb—in the rock-niche by the side of that in which the "man of God" rested. This was to be a dying testimony to "the man of God:" that his embassy of God had been real, and that surely the "thing would be" (that it would happen) "which he had cried in the word of Jehovah against the altar which (was) at Bethel, and against all the *Bamoth*-houses which (are) in the cities of Samaria." A. E.—This old seducer hath so much truth as both to give a right commentary upon God's intention in this act for the terror of the disobedient, and to give his voice to the certainty of that future judgment which his late guest had threatened to Israel. Withal, he hath so much faith and courage as to fetch that carcass from the lion; so much pity and compassion as to weep for the man of God, to inter him in his own sepulchre; so much love as to wish himself joined in death to that body which he had hastened unto death. *Bp. H.*

**29.** Is there not written, as in a legend of fire, on this nameless tomb the glory or the shame which must be the portion of every prophet of the Lord? How great are his ventures, how grand his triumphs, how irresistible his strength, how strict his account! Let us watch especially after successes. Let us beware of resting under wayside trees. Let us press on and cry mightily for God's grace. *Bp. Mackarness.*

**32.** More than three hundred years later, and nearly a century had passed since the children of Israel had been carried away from their homes. Then it was that what, centuries before, the "man of God" had foretold became literally true (2 K. 23: 15-18). The idol-temple, in which Jeroboam had stood in his power and glory on that opening day, was burned by Josiah; the *Bamoth* were cast down; and on that altar, to defile it, they gathered from the

neighboring sepulchres the bones of its former worshippers and burned them there. Yet in their terrible search of vengeance one monument arrested their attention. They asked of them at Bethel. It marked the spot where the bones of "the man of God" and of his host the "old prophet" of Samaria lay. And they reverently left the bones in their resting-places, side by side—as in life, death and burial, so still and for aye witnesses to Jehovah; and safe in their witness-bearing. But three centuries and more between the prediction and the final fulfilment: and in that time symbolic rending of the altar, changes, wars, final ruin, and desolation! And still the word seemed to slumber all those centuries of silence before it was literally fulfilled. There is something absolutely overawing in this absence of all haste on the part of God, in this certainty of the final event with apparent utter unconcern of what may happen during the long centuries that intervene, which makes us tremble as we realize how much of buried seed of warning or of promise may sleep in the ground, and how unexpectedly, but how certainly, it will ripen as in one day into a harvest of judgment or of mercy. A. E.

The yielding of the prophet to the temptation of the old prophet to eat bread with him teaches us that even a true prophet, a prophet of God, might be deceived, and that he *must* be deceived if he yielded to any pretences of inspiration on the part of any man when what he said went against a sure witness and conviction as to his own duty; that a prophet not habitually a deceiver might on a certain occasion wilfully deceive, in the plain language of Holy Writ might lie. The characteristic quality of the prophet when he is true is obedience. If he once forgets the invisible Ruler and Law-giver, no one will commit such flagrant errors, such falsehood, such blasphemy. *Maurice.*

It seemed a small offence to go home with a brother prophet; but observe that he was in no doubt as to the will of God. He knew that he was forbidden to enter any house and that the reason for that inhibition was weighty: he knew further that God would not contradict Himself or alter His command, yet his sensuous wish for food and rest prevailed. An act may seem trifling, but the principle involved in it may be momentous. So it was in Eden. A. R.—His offence was great, and it would by no means justify him that he was drawn into it by a lie; he could not be so certain of the countermand sent by another as he was of the command given to himself; nor had he any

ground to think that the command would be recalled when the reason of it remained in force, which was that he might testify his detestation of the wickedness of that place. He had great reason to suspect the honesty of this old prophet who did not himself bear His testimony, nor did God think fit to make use of him as a witness against the idolatry of the city he lived in; however, he should have taken time to beg direction from God, and not have complied so soon. God is displeased at the sins of His own people, and no man shall be protected in disobedience by the sanctity of his profession, the dignity of his office, his nearness to God, or any good services he has done for Him. H.

By his own testimony he had received express and unmistakable command of God, which Scripture again and again repeats, for the sake of emphasis; and his conduct should have been guided on the plain principle that an obvious and known duty can never be set aside by another seeming duty. Besides, what evidence had he that an angel had really spoken to the "old prophet;" or even that his tempter was a "prophet" at all, or, if a prophet, acted in the prophetic spirit? All these points are so obvious, that the conduct of the "man of God" would seem almost incredible, if we did not recall how often in every-day life we are tempted to turn aside from the plain demands of right and duty by a false call in contravention to it. In all moral and spiritual questions it is ever most dangerous to reason: simple obedience and not argument is the only safe path (comp. here Gal. 1:8). One duty can never contravene another—and the plainly known and clear command of God must silence all side-questions. Viewing the conduct of the "man of God" as a fall and a sin, all becomes plain. He had publicly announced his duty, and he had publicly contravened it; and his punishment was, through the remarkable though not miraculous circumstances under which it overtook him, equally publicly known. Throughout the whole history there is, so to speak, a remarkable equipoise in the circumstances of his sin and of his punishment, as also in the vindication of God's authority. A. E.

To this must be added that the man of God did not die merely or principally because of his sin, but "that the works of God might be made manifest in him." His death was necessary in order that his mission might not be altogether invalidated. His miserable end—as it must have seemed to them—would surely speak to



the inhabitants of Bethel and to all Israel and Judah, for long years to come, as to the sure vengeance awaiting the disobedient, whether king, prophet, priest, or people. Though dead "he cried against the altar of Bethel." And the sacred narrative affords us some ground for hoping that the "old prophet" became penitent for his sin. It is noteworthy that he joins his testimony to that of the man of God. Thus, this tragedy extorted even from *him* a warning against disobedience (verse 26), and a confirmation of the prophecy against the altar of Bethel (verse 32). *Hammond.*

**13:32. Which are in the cities of Samaria.** The city of Samaria was not built at this time, nor had the separate kingdom of Jeroboam yet obtained that name; so that the author or compiler of this book, who lived later,

writes of places and things by the names which they bore in his days, in order to make himself more intelligible to his readers. *Calmel.*

**33.** The warning, intended to turn the misguided king from his wrong-doing, was lost upon him. "After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again priests of the high places from the ends of the people; whosoever would he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places." In fact, he persisted in the course which he had marked out for himself, maintained the new altars and shrines, the self-invented feasts and rites, the idolatrous worship and the unauthorized priests, and the entire system whereof he had been the originator. Hereupon (chap. 14) he was visited, not in warning, but in judgment. G. R.

**Chap. 14: 1-20.** *Fatal sickness of Jeroboam's son Abijah; journey of the mother to Ahijah at Shiloh; the prophet's message of coming doom to the king; the child's death and sorrow of all Israel; Jeroboam's death.*

The protest of the prophet of Judah, the signs which supported it, and, above all, the solemn visitation, with its strange portents, which straightway followed it, having alike failed to arrest Jeroboam in his high-handed and shameless depravation of the true religion, we now read of the retribution which came upon his family, and which began with the sickness and death of his favorite son. The narrative distinctly conveys the impression that Jeroboam's day of grace was past, and that judgment was already begun. These events would seem to belong to a later period than that of which the preceding chapter treats—a period not far distant from the close of Jeroboam's reign. He then heard, as was fitting, from the venerable prophet who had been God's messenger to announce to him his future reign over the ten tribes, that the death of the youth whom he had destined to succeed him was but the beginning of sorrows, and foreshadowed the shameful extinction of his family (verse 14). He too, like Solomon, has sown to the wind and now reaps to the whirlwind. P. C.

One of his sons, a favorite child as it would seem, was suddenly smitten with a dangerous sickness. The king was greatly alarmed and intensely anxious to know the result. One way only of learning the future seemed possible. Ahijah, the Shilonite, the prophet of the northern kingdom, was still living at Shiloh, and might at any rate be consulted, and would perhaps be allowed to reveal the future. Jeroboam resolved to consult him. But he feared

to do so openly lest he should bring down upon himself the denunciation of woe which he knew that he deserved. He therefore caused his wife to disguise herself as a poor country woman, and sent her to Shiloh to make inquiry of the dim-sighted prophet. But the disguise proved of no avail. Ahijah, warned beforehand who his visitor would be, made the denunciation which Jeroboam feared. The child, he said, would die as the queen set foot on her palace threshold; and not only so, but the whole house of Jeroboam would, in a little time, be cut off. God had exalted Jeroboam and made him prince over his people, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David and given it to him; but he had not followed the example of David: on the contrary he had done evil above all those who had preceded him, had made other gods and molten images and had provoked Jehovah to anger and cast him behind his back. Therefore woe was denounced against Jeroboam and against his house. G. R.

**1, 2.** His son is sick, he is sorrowful; but as an amazed man seeks to go forth at the wrong door, his distraction sends him to a false help. He thinks not of God; he thinks of His prophet: he thinks of the prophet that had foretold him he should be a king; he thinks not of the God of that prophet who made him a king. Why should Jeroboam send so far to an Ahijah? Certainly his heart despised those base priests of his high places; neither could he trust either to the gods or the clergy of his own making. His conscience rests upon the

fidelity of that man whose doctrine he had forsaken. How did this idolater strive against his own heart, while he inwardly despised those whom he professed to honor. *Bp. H.*

2. In sending his wife to consult the prophet, Jeroboam wished the proceeding to be completely secret; for had it been publicly known that he himself had no confidence in his own senseless idols, and that in any matter of importance he applied to the prophet of the true God, the confidence of his subjects in his government would have been materially shaken, and they would have returned to the worship of that true God whom they had imprudently forsaken. His wife was the only person in whom he could confide; he knew that as a mother she would be diligent in her inquiry, and as a wife faithful in her report. *Stackhouse.*

6-18. He idly calculated that the prophet, whose view could extend into the future, hid in the counsels of God, could not see through a present matter wrapped up only in the thin cover of a woman's hood. "There was never," says Dr. Hall, "a wicked man who was not infatuate, and in nothing more than in those things wherein he hoped most to transcend the reach of others." All this fine contrivance was blown to pieces the moment the wife of Jeroboam crossed Ahijah's threshold; for then she heard the voice of the blind prophet—"Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings." He then broke forth in a strong tide of denunciation against Jeroboam, because he had sinned and made Israel to sin; and the voice which had proclaimed his rise from a low estate to royal power, now, with still stronger tone, proclaimed the downfall and ruin of his house—quenched in blood—its members to find tombs only in the bowels of beasts and birds. There was one exception—only one. The youth of whom she came to inquire—he only should come to his grave in peace, by dying of his present disease, because in him only was "found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam." Woful tidings these for a mother's heart. Here was beginning of judgment upon Jeroboam, and upon her, because she was his. Judgment in taking away the only well-conditioned and worthy son, and judgment stored up in and for the ill-conditioned ones who were suffered to remain. God, when it suits the purposes of His wisdom and His justice, can afflict no less by what He spares than by what He takes. Yet there was mercy in this judg-

ment; mercy, strange as it seems to say, to him on whom the sentence of death was passed. It is so stated; and it is more intelligible than it seems. It was because there *was* some good thing found in him that he should die. Death was to be for him a reward, a blessing, a deliverance. He should die peaceably upon his bed; for him all Israel should mourn; for him many tears be shed; and he should be brought with honor to his tomb. More than all, he would be taken from his part in the evil that hung over his house; and the Lord's vindictory justice would thus be spared the seeming harshness of bringing ruin upon a righteous king for his father's crimes. Alas! how little do we know the real objects of the various incidents of life and death—of mercy, of punishment, and of trial! In this case the motives were disclosed; and we are suffered to glance upon some of the great secrets of death, which form the trying mysteries of life. Having the instance, we can find the parallels of lives, full of hope and promise, prematurely taken, and that in mercy, as we can judge, to those who depart. The heavenly Husbandman often gathers for His garner the fruit that early ripens, without suffering it to hang needlessly long, beaten by storms, upon the tree. Oh, how often, as many a grieved heart can tell, do the Lord's best beloved die betimes—taken from the evil to come—while the unripe, the evil, the injurious, live long for mischief to themselves and others! Roses and lilies wither far sooner than thorns and thistles. *Kittó.*

12. **The child shall die.** What a mixture is here of severity and favor in one act; favor to the son, severity to the father. Sometimes God strikes in favor, but more often forbears out of severity. The best are fittest for heaven, the earth is fittest for the worst. This is the region of sin and misery, that of immortality. It is no argument of disfavor to be taken early from a well-spent life; as it is no proof of approbation to be permitted to live to advanced years in sin. *Bp. H.*

13. **Because in him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.** Such was the testimony which the Lord gave, by His prophet, of young Abijah, the son of wicked Jeroboam. The father was branded, even to a proverb, for his abominable wickedness. The son is recorded by the Lord for his goodness; singled out from the whole house of his father to be blessed of his God and come to his grave in peace. *W. Mason.*—Even a young and brief life may be fruitful in

blessing. Young as Abijah was, the whole nation mourned for him. The length of life is not to be judged by the number of its years. That life is the longest in which God has been best served and the world most benefited. Piety in life is the only guarantee of peace in death. An early departure from this world is not a thing to be dreaded provided our heart is right with God. If you would come to your grave in peace, be it sooner or be it later, there must be found in you "some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel." *J. Thain Davidson.*

**19. The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, are written in the Chronicles.** In the 13th chapter of 2 Chronicles we find an account of the war between Abijah (king of Judah and son of Rehoboam) and Jeroboam. In a great battle, with an immense array of forces on either side, it is said (verses 15-20) that "God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and all Judah. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter." "Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again; and the Lord struck him, and he died." (See reign of Abijah, king of Judah.) B.

If we lay together all the particulars that have been enumerated concerning Jeroboam, and consider the parts, rise, and degrees of his sin, we shall find that it was not for nothing that the Spirit of God so frequently and bitterly, in Scripture, stigmatizes this person; for it represents him first encroaching upon the civil government, thence changing the religion of his country, debasing the office that God had made sacred, introducing a false way of worship and destroying the true. And in this we have a full and fair description of a foul king; that is, of an usurper and an impostor; or, to use one word more comprehensive than both, of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." *South.*—For two hundred and fifty-seven years this terrible indictment, "he made Israel to sin," follows Jeroboam and his kingdom through all the pages of this sacred record, until the kingdom was utterly destroyed and the ten tribes blotted from the map of human history, even as Moses and the prophets had predicted (De. 28:36; 1 K. 14:15; Hos. 9; Amos 5). The establishment of idolatry absolutely controlled and determined the development of Israel's history until its utter extermination by the Assyrians seven hundred and twenty-one years before the birth of our Lord. *A. W. Pitzer.*—In the strong language of the sacred writer, he "druve Israel

from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin" (2 K. 17:21). As king after king is noted for his wickedness, it is with the words that he "departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin." For a period of two centuries and a half, down to the time of the Assyrian invasion, when Israel ceased to be a nation, the same direful language is continued. Jeroboam's evil example was the type and instigation of nearly all the faithlessness that followed it. He gave, indeed, a new departure to the history of Israel. Thenceforward idolatry never ceased to contend with the ancient faith until it was at last purged out by the wholesome though painful discipline of the Captivity. *Milligan.*

The history of the Jews during this period presents the aspect of one long judgment of God, in which sin brings forth death, and thus becomes its own punishment. This is true also in the history of individuals; and we have in this fact one of the strongest evidences that we are under the government of a holy God. Let us never forget that His holiness is at the same time love, and that through all the dark and sorrowful vicissitudes of our life He is carrying out His plan of mercy. In spite of all its falls, its wanderings and its woes, Israel did fulfill its preparatory mission. If in the end the theocracy tottered to its fall, this failure also entered into the conditions of the Divine plan. Israel was never treated by God, however, as a mere passive instrument. God gave it repeated warnings, as by the mouth of the unknown prophet who was sent to Jeroboam to declare to him the judgments of God. *E. de P.*

*Three suggestions touching Jeroboam's reign.* The first respects God's principles of dealing with rulers and nations. Although he has now divided the domains of David, and maintains his announced purpose in reference to each kingdom throughout its history, yet he deals with every king and his people according to *their conduct*. Every reign is prospered or punished according to the obedience or disobedience of its ruler and subjects to His commands. The second is hinted at in chap. 14:16. It is explicitly stated in Eccl. 9:18, *One sinner destroyeth much good*. In the continuance of David's house, notwithstanding Solomon's sin, we learn the power of a consecrated man for good and for perpetuating good to children's children. Here we behold a like power for evil of a self-willed, self-seeking man. How clearly it stands out in this and the whole after

record! Through his device of a false worship, the whole nation is turned hopelessly away from the God of their fathers. And in the effects of his one transgression are involved the steadily increasing guilt and common doom of all succeeding kings and generations of Israel. *Third.* Jeroboam's spirit and course simply outlines the aims and the course of every *self-seeker*, and his fearful experience only illustrates the invariable result. He doubt-

ed God's word and disbelieved His promise. All sin originates in doubt and disbelief of God. Under the influence of his disbelief, he planned for his own safety and continuance in power. His methods involved direct and flagrant disobedience to Jehovah, and issued in every form of impiety. The result of his sin was death. And always "the wages of sin is death." "When it is finished (full grown and matured) sin bringeth forth death!" B.

## Section 6.

### REIGNS OF NADAB, BAASHA, ELAH, AND ZIMRI.

1 KINGS 15 : 25-31 ; 16 : 1-20.

**15 : 25** AND Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of **26** Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he **27** made Israel to sin. And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him ; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines ; for Nadab **28** and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah **29** did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead. And it came to pass that, as soon as he was king, he smote all the house of Jeroboam ; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him ; according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by the hand **30** of his servant Ahijah the Shilonite : for the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and wherewith he made Israel to sin ; because of his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD, **31** the God of Israel, to anger. Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they **32** not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ? And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.

**33** In the third year of Asa king of Judah began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign over all **34** Israel in Tirzah, and reigned twenty and four years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made **16 : 1** Israel to sin. And the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, **2** saying, Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel ; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to **3** sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins ; behold, I will utterly sweep away Baasha and **4** his house ; and I will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat ; and him that dieth of his in the field shall **5** the fowls of the air eat. Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, **6** are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ? And Baasha slept **7** with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah ; and Elah his son reigned in his stead. And moreover by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of the LORD against Baasha, and against his house, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he smote him.

**8** In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign **9** over Israel in Tirzah, and reigned two years. And his servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him : now he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house **10** of Arza, which was over the household in Tirzah : and Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead.

11 And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he smote all the house of Baasha : he left him not a single man child, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends. Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, for all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned, and wherewith they made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ? In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. Now the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also smitten the king ; wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the castle of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, for his sins which he sinned in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin. Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ?

#### REIGN OF NADAB.

*Two Years, 2d and 3d of Asa, of Judah.*

1 KINGS 15 : 25-31.

OF Nadab, the son and successor of Jeroboam, nothing is recorded except that he ascended the throne of Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah, and was murdered in the year following by Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the tribe of Issachar, at Gibbethon, a Philistine town which the Israelites were besieging. No particulars are given of his age or actions. It is merely said, in the most general way, that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin."

25. A reign of "two years" is assigned to him ; but the writer counts any part of a year as "a year ;" and all that we can distinctly gather from him is, that Nadab began to reign in some part of Asa's second year, and was murdered in some part of his third. G. R.

#### 26. Even in the third year of Asa.

We have here (as in chap. 16 : 8, 28) a conspicuous instance of the Hebrew habit of counting parts of years as entire years. It is obvious that if Nadab succeeded to the throne in the *second* (verse 25) and died in the *third* year of Asa, he cannot have reigned two full years.

29. By his servant Ahijah the Shilonite (chap. 14 : 10). It is not implied that it was *because* of this prophecy that Baasha exterminated the house of Jeroboam. It is probable that, so far from setting himself to fulfil it, he knew nothing about it, and, as he thought, merely took effectual measures for his own security. His seat could never be safe so long as one of Jeroboam's house survived. *Hammond.*

We have here a signal fulfilment of the curse denounced upon Jeroboam in the utter extinction of his family. There was not left to him any that breathed. T. C.

30. It is clear to the most cursory reader that a daring impiety characterizes the whole period from Jeroboam to Hoshea, and for this "the sin of Jeroboam" is mainly responsible. Of each of the kings of Israel do we read that he "walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did." Not one of these nineteen kings, sprung as many of them were from different lineages, had the courage and the piety to retrace his steps, and revert to the primitive faith and mode of worship. For Jeroboam had made the calf-worship an integral part of the national life. It was so intertwined with the existence of Israel as a separate people, that to abandon it would be to repudiate all the traditions of the kingdom, and tacitly to acknowledge the superiority of Judah. Any king attempting such a reformation would appear to be a traitor to his country. The attempt would have provoked a second schism. It was clear to each monarch at his accession, if he reflected on the subject at all, that the calf-worship *must go on*. Ahab and Jezebel are not wholly responsible for the abominations of Baal and Ashtaroth. The daring innovations of Jeroboam had prepared the minds of men for this last and greatest violation of the law. The plunge into wholesale idolatry would have been impossible, had not the deep descent to the calf-worship been traversed first. *Hammond.*

33. **Tirzah.** A little to the north of Shechem, in the mountain district, twelve miles from Samaria, on the road from Nablous to Bei-

san, in a well-wooded country, lies Teiasir, the ancient *Tirzah*. It was an old Canaanite city, whose king fell before Joshua (chap. 12 : 24). Its remarkable beauty—"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah" (Cant. 6 : 4)—caused it to be selected as the royal residence by Jeroboam. His successors, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, and Zimri, also resided at Tirzah, where Baasha and probably the others were buried. Here was matured the conspiracy of Zimri, and, in retribution, he in his turn was here besieged by Omri, who, after the capture of the place, resided here for six years, till he removed the capital to the new city of Samaria. Several generations later, at Tirzah, Menahem organized his rebellion against Shallum ; but so soon as he was successful he established his government in Samaria. There are numerous cave-sepulchres north of the village, among which may be the tombs of the first four kings of Israel, who were buried here. *Tristram*.

#### REIGN OF BAASHA.

*Twenty-four Years, 8d to 26th of Asa, of Judah.*

1 KINGS 15 : 33, 34 ; 16 : 1-7.

BAASHA, the third Israelite monarch, had a reign of twenty-four years (15 : 33). He was the son of a certain Ahijah, of whom nothing more is known, and belonged to the undistinguished and unimportant tribe of Issachar. It would seem that he was originally of very humble rank (16 : 2) ; and at the siege of Gibbethon, where he conceived the design of murdering Nadab and seating himself upon his throne, he was perhaps no more than a common soldier. But he was "a man of distinguished bravery," ambitious to excess, and of extraordinary audacity. Without, so far as appears, any prophetic encouragement, without claim of any kind to the kingly office, he ventured to organize a conspiracy against the reigning sovereign, the son of a valiant sire, who must have had the support of many powerful interests. All that we know is, that Baasha succeeded in his enterprise, that he slew Nadab at Gibbethon, and was accepted as king in his stead, obtaining the throne, as it would seem, without any civil war or long struggle. The nation, which the house of Jeroboam had in no way attached to itself, acquiesced in his rule, probably preferring the firm hand that had seized the reins of government to the feeble one from which they had slipped. In firmly establishing himself upon the throne and con-

solidating his power, Baasha showed the same vigor and unscrupulousness that he had exhibited in making himself king. Unmoved by any stir of compassion or pity, he relentlessly exterminated the entire house of Jeroboam. Religion profited nothing by the change of dynasty. The worship of the calves remained unchanged at Dan and Bethel ; the unauthorized priesthood was maintained in office ; Jehovistic Israelites were hindered from carrying their offerings to Jerusalem or participating in the Temple worship (2 Chron. 16 : 1) ; Jeroboam's system was, in fact, continued without the slightest modification, and the prophetic order can have been no better pleased with the rule of the house of Ahijah than with that of the house of Nebat. It is in military matters that a difference can be traced between the policy of the first and the second Israelite dynasty. The house of Nebat had been content to stand on the defensive against Judah, to seek to repel attack rather than to make it, and to look to self-protection rather than to self-aggrandizement. It had even submitted under Jeroboam to the loss of territory, and had subsequently made no effort to recover the captured cities. Baasha's military policy was the exact opposite of this. Having strengthened himself by an alliance with his northern neighbor, Benhadad, king of Damascus (2 Chron. 16 : 3), he challenged Judah to the combat ; he collected an army, marched southward, crossed the Judean border, reconquered the territory taken from Israel by Abijah in the reign of Jeroboam, and pursuing his victorious march seized and occupied Ramah, a position of the utmost importance in Judea itself, which he endeavored rapidly to convert into a fortress of the first class. The object, as Ewald sees, was to "annihilate" Judah. If it could have been maintained for a few years in the hands of Judah's bitter foes, Jerusalem must have succumbed, and with the loss of Jerusalem the Judean state must have collapsed. In Judah's history we learn how Asa met the daring plan of his adversary, how he bribed Benhadad to change sides and turn against Baasha, with the consequent failure of Baasha's plan, and the recovery by Asa of the fortress which had threatened him with ruin. Thus Baasha's attempt to re-establish the unity of the monarchy by absorbing Judea into his own territories came to nought. The invasion of Israel on the north by Benhadad and the speedy capture not only of the towns of Dan, Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, but of "all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali" (1 K. 15 : 20), revealed the

weakness of the Israelite kingdom in respect of its northern frontier, which was dominated by the more elevated tracts about Lebanon and Hermon that never formed any part of the actual territory of the chosen people, excepting under the brief dominion of David and Solomon. This weakness showed itself at other periods of Israelite history besides the present one, and must have caused Baasha some alarm. He seems to have hurriedly granted all the demands which Benhadad preferred, and to have thenceforth carefully abstained from provoking his hostility. A necessary result was the complete relinquishment of his aggressive designs against the kingdom of Judah, and a resumption of the defensive attitude toward it, which had been maintained by Jeroboam and Nadab. Thus Baasha found himself no whit further advanced on the path of military success than his predecessors. The honor and power of the kingdom would indeed seem to have "sunk lower under the new dynasty than under its predecessor." Discontent consequently showed itself. A prophet (Jehu) denounced the murder by which Baasha had attained the throne (1 K. 16 : 7), reproached him for his slavish adherence to the sins of Jeroboam, and prophesied for him and his house the very same fate which, a quarter of a century earlier, had been prophesied for the house of the son of Nebat. Baasha, however, maintained his power, like Jeroboam, till his death, and left his crown to his son Elah, who at once and without difficulty mounted the throne. The scene of Baasha's death was Tirzah, which Jeroboam had made the capital (1 K. 14 : 17); and there he was laid to rest with the customary honors. G. R.

**1. Because he smote him.** Although the judgment of God upon Jeroboam and his house, as announced by the prophet, was thus fulfilled, it must not for a moment be thought that the foul deed of Baasha was thereby lessened in guilt. *On the contrary, Holy Scripture here expressly marks this crime as one of the grounds of Baasha's later judgment.* It is perhaps not easy, and yet it is of supreme importance for the understanding of the Old Testament, to distinguish in these events the action of man from the overruling direction of God. Thus when, after his accession, the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, was commissioned to denounce the sin and to announce the judgment of Baasha, these two points were clearly put forward in his message: the sin of Baasha in the murder of Jeroboam's house, and the fact that his exaltation was due to the Lord. A. E.

#### REIGN OF ELAH.

*About One Year, 27th of Asa, of Judah.*

1 KINGS 16 : 8-14.

THE figure of Elah, the son and successor of Baasha, is as shadowy in the sacred history as that of Nadab, the son and successor of Jeroboam. Of neither are we told his age at his accession, or any special trait of disposition. Both have short reigns, little if at all exceeding a year; both "continue in the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat," and "provoke God to anger with their vanities;" both, moreover, engage in a war against the Philistines within a short period of their accession; and in both reigns the special scene of the war is the Philistine city of Gibbethon. The only important difference between their histories is, that whereas Nadab put himself at the head of his army and proceeded to encounter the hardships of the siege in person, Elah sent against Gibbethon the captains of his host, Zimri and Omri, while he himself remained in the capital, Tirzah, drinking and revelling in the palace of the steward of his household, a certain Arza. We may assume that Zimri was kept acquainted with the king's unkingly conduct, and saw in it his own opportunity. The associations of Gibbethon suggested that kings were not unassailable, and the special circumstances of Elah's position were such as at once to provoke attack and to facilitate it. Zimri, without informing Omri or the army of his intention, withdrew himself from Gibbethon, and, returning to Tirzah, surprised the wretched monarch at his drinking-bout, and assassinated him. Elah, who began to reign in the twenty-sixth year of Asa (1 K. 16 : 8), perished in the same king's twenty-seventh year (*ibid.*, verse 15), so that he probably did not hold the throne for more than a few months. G. R.

#### REIGN OF ZIMRI.

*Seven Days, 27th of Asa, of Judah.*

1 KINGS 16 : 15-20.

ZIMRI, the bold soldier, who, imitating Baasha, brought the second Israelite dynasty to an end by the assassination of its second monarch, proceeded to follow up his first success by a further imitation of his model by destroying all the house of Baasha, not sparing any, either of his kinsfolk or of his close friends. This extreme severity may have rendered him unpopular. At any rate, when the army which was at Gibbethon heard of his insurrection and of the bloody deeds by which he had followed it

up, they were so exasperated that they broke out into revolt, refused to acknowledge Zimri as their monarch, and invested Omri, who had been left at Gibbethon in sole command, with the sovereignty. Omri did not hesitate for a moment to accept the rank conferred upon him, and at once took steps to dispossess his rival of the throne. By his orders the army broke up from before Gibbethon, raised the siege, and marching with all speed to Tirzah, besieged the pretender in his capital. Zimri did not dare to venture a battle, but remained within the walls. Within a very short time the defences were forced and the town entered. Brave, fierce, and obstinate to the last degree, Zimri took a desperate resolve, and throwing himself into the royal palace, a sort of fortress within a fortress, he stood at bay, and when further resistance was hopeless, gave orders that the palace should be set on fire and burnt it over his head. It would appear that Zimri, even in his short reign of seven days, found occasion to give formal approval to the religious system of Jero-

boam, since it is declared of him (verses 18, 19) that "he died for his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin that he did, to make Israel to sin." G. R.

**18. And died.** This word is intimately connected with the verse following. The text conveys clearly that Zimri's tragical death was a retribution for his sins. Bähr remarks that of Elah and Zimri we learn nothing, apart from the fact that they held to the sin of Jeroboam, except how they died. It is interesting to remember here the aspect these repeated revolutions and assassinations would wear to the kingdom of Judah, then enjoying quietness and prosperity under Asa. We cannot doubt for a moment that they were regarded as so many manifestations of the righteous judgment of God, and as the outcomes of that spirit of insubordination and impiety which, in their eyes, had brought about both the division of the kingdom and the schism in the church. *Hammond.*

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## Section 7.

REIGN OF OMRI, 12 YEARS.

**27th to 38th of Asa, of Judah.**

1 KINGS 16 : 21-28.

21 **THEN** were the people of Israel divided into two parts : half of the people followed Tibni  
 22 the son of Ginath, to make him king ; and half followed Omri. But the people that followed  
 Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath : so Tibni died, and  
 23 Omri reigned. In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over  
 24 Israel, and reigned twelve years : six years reigned he in Tirzah. And he bought the hill  
 Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver ; and he built on (or *fortified*) the hill, and called  
 the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill,  
 25 Samaria. And Omri did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and dealt wickedly  
 26 above all that were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of  
 Nebat, and in his sins wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of  
 27 Israel, to anger with their vanities. Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and  
 his might that he shewed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of  
 28 Israel ? So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria : and Ahab his son  
 reigned in his stead.

*Summary.* After a reign of twenty-two years, Jeroboam, the first king of Israel, was succeeded by his son Nadab. A conspiracy, headed by Baasha, general of the army, destroyed the entire family of Jeroboam less than two years after the accession of Nadab. Ba-

asha reigned twenty-four years, and was succeeded by his son Elah. Within a year this son and the whole family of Baasha were in turn utterly destroyed by Zimri, captain of the palace guard. Seven days Zimri reigned. Besieged by the army under Omri, then in the field,



and the capital (Tirzah) taken, Zimri burnt the palace and destroyed himself. Omri, the commanding general, was then chosen by the army to fill the throne. But "half the people" supported Tibni. Four years of struggle ensued, when "Tibni died" and Omri reigned. His entire reign extended twelve years. B.

Omri was the sixth king of Israel, and the founder of the fourth dynasty, which lasted for three generations and four kings. His father's name and tribe are unknown. The twelve years of his reign are probably to be dated from the death of Elah, as his full recognition is placed in the thirty-first year of Asa, and the accession of his son Ahab in the thirty-eighth of Asa; so that his six years' reign at Tirzah would include the civil war. P. S.—Omri was the first founder of a new dynasty, who had not come to the crown by a revolt against his sovereign and the extermination of his house. It is true that he led the army against Zimri; but in so doing he appeared as the avenger of the king whom Zimri had murdered, and the usurper's reign of a week was too short to enable his family, if he had any, to establish any influence dangerous to Omri, or to render their extermination politically expedient. However, it came to pass that Omri attained to the throne with comparatively undefiled hands. He was even spared the blood of Zimri, that guilty man having burned the royal palace over his head in Tirzah, which had by this time become the capital. *Kitto*.

**24.** *Omri builds Samaria and establishes it as the capital.* The hill Samaria, six miles north of Shechem, was a position of peculiar strength and beauty, in a fertile, well-watered region. It continued to be the capital of Israel until it was taken and destroyed by the Assyrian king, when the kingdom itself became forever extinct. Subsequently it was twice re-peopled and destroyed. Herod the Great rebuilt it and called it Sebaste. The ruins still remain under the corrupted name Sebastiyeh. So great was the fame of the city Samaria that ultimately it gave name to the province lying between Judea and Galilee, and to its inhabitants, the Samaritans. B.—There were objections to Tirzah as the capital from its situation, which was neither sufficiently central nor sufficiently strong. Omri cast about for a place, near the middle of the land, which should be strong in a military point of view, capable of being fortified, productive, sufficiently watered, and accessible from the various parts of the kingdom. This he found in the "hill of Shomerôn," a few miles to the northwest of the old capital,

Shechem, which he accordingly purchased, and on which he built his town. G. R.

The situation of this royal city, if less beautiful, is more commanding than that of its sister, Shechem. Nearly in the centre of a basin, about five miles in diameter, rises a flattish, oval-shaped hill, to the height of some three hundred feet. On the summit is a long and nearly level plateau, which breaks down at the sides one hundred feet or more to an irregular terrace or belt of level land; below this the roots of the hill spread off more gradually into the surrounding valleys. The whole is now cultivated in terraces, in the formation of which the stones of the ancient city have been freely used. Groves of luxuriant olives almost cover the southern side and fill the valley below, while single trees and little groups dot the rest. A wide circuit of picturesque mountains encompasses the basin, having only a narrow opening on the west, through which a winter torrent finds its way to the plain of Sharon. Little villages, with their green corn-fields and gray olive groves, stud the dark mountain sides or crown their summits, making the whole landscape one of the richest and most beautiful in Palestine. The modern village of Sebastieh may contain about sixty houses, with a population of four hundred. It stands upon the broad terrace midway up the eastern side of the hill. The view from the top is a noble one, embracing the glens and vales round the hill, the circuit of mountains, a section of the plain of Sharon, and the wide expanse of the Mediterranean. No better site for a capital could have been selected in the length and breadth of Palestine—a strong position, rich environs, central situation, and an elevation sufficient to catch untainted the cool, healthy breezes of the sea. *Porter*.—It stands some four hundred feet above the valley, the sides of the hill being steep and terraced in every direction for cultivation, or perhaps for defensive purposes; broad and open valleys stretch north and south, and the hill is thus almost isolated. Strategical reasons may be supposed to have dictated the choice of the capital of Omri, for on the north the hill commands the main road to Jezreel over a steep pass, on the west it dominates the road to the coast, and on the east that to the Jordan. *Corder*.

In B.C. 721 Samaria was taken, after its second three years' siege, by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and with its fall closed the history of the kingdom of Israel. It was afterward taken, and its inhabitants transplanted by Alexander the Great. Again, the Jews, under Hyrcanus,

nearly destroyed it, and in turn the old inhabitants were re-established by Pompey. Augustus gave it to Herod the Great, who reconquered it, rebuilt it, and added most sumptuous palaces, theatres, temples, stadium, and colonnades, changing its name to *Sebaste* (i. e., Augusta), in honor of his patron, by the Arabic form of which, *Sebastiyeh*, it is still known. *Tristram*.

**25-27.** *The character of Omri and of his reign.* Of his five predecessors, the common record is that they sinned and made Israel to sin. Of this man, head of the fourth family that reigned, it is said: *Omri wrought evil, and did worse than all before him.* Worse did he than Jeroboam and Baasha, in compelling the people to iniquity by framing it into a law. For in Micah 6: 16 we are told that the keeping of the statutes of Omri made "Israel a desolation," referring probably to idol-worship. The noted Moabite Stone contains the name of Omri, and Assyrian inscriptions designate Samaria as the "house or city of Omri." B.

It must have been early in his reign that Omri, desirous of military fame, invaded the territory of Moab. The Moabites, reduced to subjection by David, and treated with extreme severity, would seem to have recovered their independence at the separation of the Israelites into two hostile kingdoms, and to have maintained it until Omri's attack upon them. Omri, as we learn from the Moabite Stone, quarrelled with Chemosh-Gad, the father of the Mesha mentioned in 2 K. 3: 4. He made his first assault on Medeba, a Moabite city about seven miles to the south of Heshbon, marked by the ruins of the modern Mâdeba. Having conquered this place and occupied it, he proceeded to overrun the entire Moabite country, which he subjugated and attached to his own kingdom as a dependency. The Moabite royal family was indeed maintained on the throne and continued to govern the country, but a heavy tribute was required from the nation, which was felt as a grievous "oppression." Mesha says, "Now Omri, king of Israel, he oppressed Moab many days. His son succeeded him; and he also said, I will oppress Moab." We do not know the exact amount of tribute during Omri's reign, but under his son and successor it reached the almost incredible total of one hundred thousand sheep and one hundred thousand lambs annually (2 K. 3: 4).

Omri appears also to have carried on a war, but an unsuccessful war, with Syria of Damascus. Its result was the cession to the Damascus kingdom of a number of cities (1 K. 20: 34),

among them probably Ramoth-Gilead, the most important of the trans-Jordanic towns, and the further grant to the Syrians of a right to "make streets in Samaria." Such concessions imply a very serious antecedent defeat; and we must thus, in estimating the military talents of this king, set against his Moabite victories, which were no doubt brilliant, the grave losses that he suffered on his northern and northeastern frontier, which must have seriously crippled the strength of his kingdom in that quarter. The religious policy of Omri differed little from that of his predecessor, but was, if anything, characterized by greater thoroughness. He "wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all that were before him" (verse 25). We hear in later times of the "statutes of Omri" as still kept by the Israelites (Micah 6: 16); and we may gather from this that he reduced the calf-worship into a regular formal system, whereto all were required to render obedience. It is clear that he adhered to Jeroboam's system (verse 26), and so rigidly carried it out as to leave a worse name behind him in respect of religion than even the worst of his predecessors. He reigned twelve years, from the twenty-seventh to the thirty-eighth of Asa. During the first six of these years he resided at Tirzah, and during the last six at Samaria. During the first four he contended for the throne with Tibni; during the last eight he was sole monarch. G. R.

Omri's policy was evidently directed toward obtaining peace for his kingdom, by the cultivation of friendly relations, not only with the kingdom of Judah, but also with other neighboring states. Peace seems to have been concluded, by the sacrifice of certain Israelitish towns, with Damascus Syria, which under the dynasty of the Hadads had become, as Israel had already experienced under Baasha, a formidable power. The marriage of Omri's son, the weak *Ahab*, with the Phœnician princess *Jezebel*, is to be attributed to the above-named political motive. O.

The dynasties that reigned at Samaria have long been swept away; the people over whom they ruled carried into a captivity over which the veil of impenetrable mystery lies. Only the word of the Lord has stood firm and immovable. Of Nadab, of Baasha, of Elah, of Zimri, and of Omri, Scripture has only one and the same thing to say: that they walked in the way and in the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, "wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke Jehovah, the God of Israel, to anger." And over each and all did the same judgment

sweep. And yet there were more grievous sins to follow and more terrible judgments to come. A. E.

#### MESHA, KING OF MOAB, AND THE MOABITE STONE.

The historic connections of Mesha, king of Moab, with Israel have received a most remarkable confirmation by the discovery in 1869 of what is generally known as "*the Moabite Stone.*" This is a pillar or monumental stone about three feet nine inches in length, two feet four inches in breadth, and one foot two inches in thickness. It is undoubtedly an official monument commemorating the emancipation of Moab from an oppressive subjection during about forty years to the kings of Israel. The language is fundamentally Hebrew, no word occurring of which the root does not exist in the Hebrew Scriptures. "It reads (says M. de Vogue) like a page of the Hebrew Scriptures." "The form of the letters is the oldest known to any written language. The Pentateuch was no doubt written in such letters in the time of Moses; Solomon and Hiram corresponded with each other in such characters." At the time it was copied enough was still legible to show that Moab had been in subjection to Israel, and had achieved her independence, and that the reigning monarch under whom her independence was achieved bore the name *Mesha*. It began thus:

"I, Mesha, am son of Chemosh-gad king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father reigned over Moab thirty years, and I reigned after my father. And I erected this stone to Chemosh at Karcha [a stone of] salvation, for he saved me from all despoilers and let me see my desire upon all my enemies, and Omri, king of Israel, who oppressed Moab many days, for Chemosh was angry with his land. His son succeeded him, and he also said, I will oppress Moab."

Its tone throughout is remarkably religious—in the sense of recognizing the fortunes of his kingdom, good or ill, as determined by his national god Chemosh. It is chiefly occupied with his special exploits in war and in the rebuilding of cities. A large number of proper names—*i. e.*, of great kings, and of cities—appear on this stone—names which occur also in the Hebrew Scriptures—the number supposed to be satisfactorily identified being twenty-three, and, conjecturally, some others. It is generally admitted that this Moabite Stone brings to light the oldest extant specimen of alphabetic writing. It records the military achievements of Mesha, king of Moab, for a period of forty

years or more, from about B.C. 925. This would fix the date of this writing not later than B.C. 885—contemporary with the accession of Jehu, the death of Ahaziah, king of Judah, and of Jehoram, of Israel. H. C.

#### THE PHŒNICIAN ALPHABET AND MOABITE STONE.

It was from the Phœnicians that the Israelites and the nations round about them received their alphabet. This alphabet was of Egyptian origin. As far back as the monuments of Egypt carry us, we find the Egyptians using their hieroglyphics to express not only ideas and syllables, but also the letters of an alphabet. Even in the remote epoch of the second dynasty they already possessed an alphabet in which the twenty-one simple sounds of the language were represented by special hieroglyphic pictures. These pictures, however, were employed only on the public monuments; for books and letters and business transactions the Egyptians made use of a running hand, in which the original pictures had undergone great transformations. This running hand is termed "*hieratic*," and it was from the hieratic forms of the Egyptian letters that the Phœnician letters were derived. The Phœnician alphabet passed first from the Phœnicians to the Greeks, then from the Greeks to the Romans, and finally from the Romans to the nations of modern Europe. But before the alphabet was communicated to Greece by the Phœnician traders, it had already been adopted by their Semitic kinsmen in Western Asia. Excavations in Palestine and the country east of the Jordan would doubtless bring to light inscriptions compiled in it much older than the oldest which we at present know. Only a few years ago the gap between the time when the Phœnicians first borrowed their new alphabet and the time to which the earliest texts written in it belonged was very great indeed. But during the last fifteen years discoveries have been made which help to fill it up, and prove to us at the same time what may be found if we will only seek. One of these discoveries is that of the famous Moabite Stone. In the summer of 1869, Dr. Klein, a German missionary, while travelling in what was once the land of Moab, discovered a most curious relic of antiquity among the ruins of Dhibân, the ancient Dibon. This relic was a stone of black basalt, rounded at the top, two feet broad and nearly four feet high. Across it ran an inscription of thirty-four lines in the letters of the Phœnician alphabet. Dr. Klein unfortunately contented himself

with copying a few words, and endeavoring to secure the monument for the Berlin Museum. Things always move slowly in the East, and it was not until a year later that the negotiations for the purchase of the stone were completed between the Prussian Government on the one side and the Arabs and Turkish pashas on the other. At length, however, all was arranged, and it was agreed that the stone should be handed over to the Germans for the sum of £80. At this moment M. Clermont-Ganneau, a member of the French Consulate at Jerusalem, with lamentable indiscretion, sent men to take squeezes of the inscription, and offered no less than £375 for the stone itself. At once the cupidity of both Arabs and pashas was aroused; the Governor of Nablûs demanded the treasure for himself, while the Arabs, fearing it might be taken from them, put a fire under it, poured cold water over it, broke it in pieces, and distributed the fragments as charms among the different families of the tribe. Thanks to M. Clermont-Ganneau, most of these fragments have now been recovered, and the stone, once more put together, may be seen in the Museum of the Louvre at Paris. The fragments have been fitted into their proper places by the help of the imperfect 'squeezes taken before the monument was broken. When the inscription came to be read, it turned out to be a record of Mesha, king of Moab, of whom we are told in 2 Kings 3 that after Ahab's death he "rebelled against the king of Israel," and was vainly besieged in his capital Kirharaseth by the combined armies of Israel, Judah and Edom. The whole inscription reads like a chapter from one of the historical books of the Old Testament. Not only are the phrases the same, but the words and grammatical forms are, with one or two exceptions, all found in scriptural Hebrew. The covenant name of the God of Israel (Jehovah) occurs in the inscription, spelt in exactly the same way as in the Old Testament. *Sayce.*

The reference to *Chemosh*, the national deity of Moab, is quite in harmony with the Bible allusion to Chemosh as the *abomination of Moab* (1 K. 11 : 7); and the whole inscription betokens the long subjection of Moab, and the final triumph of the Moabites. For sixty-five years there is in the Bible no further notice of the Moabites—not until after Elisha's death, when, as we are told, "the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year" (2 K. 13 : 20). The silence of Scripture on this subject is itself an acknowledgment of the Moabitish success and independence. The inscription further gives an account of Mesha's tri-

umph, and of his reorganizing and strengthening his long-oppressed and sorely wasted kingdom. This testimony is altogether singular, and cannot be set aside or modified by any possible ingenuity of mere criticism. *W. Fraser.*

But the inscription of Mesha does not merely confirm and illustrate Scripture. Like the monument erected by Shishak at Karnak, it gives us much additional information with respect to events only lightly touched on in the Bible, helping to fill out the very brief narrative of the writer of Kings. We learn from it that the Moabites, who were reduced to subjection by David (2 Sam. 8 : 2; 1 Chron. 18 : 2), and were no doubt among the tributaries of Solomon (1 K. 4 : 21, 24; 2 Chron. 9 : 23-26), regained their liberty before the accession of Omri; that, Omri reconquered them early in his reign, and put a yoke upon them which was regarded as oppressive; that Ahab, Omri's son, who succeeded him, continued this oppression; that it lasted for a period which might be called, *roundly*, "forty years;" that at length Mesha, the Moabite tributary king, who had succeeded his father in the sovereignty, regarding himself as divinely commissioned by his god, Chemosh, rebelled; that a war of independence followed with varied success, but that ultimately Mesha prevailed, recovered the various strongholds which the Israelites had fortified in his territory, and established his sway over the whole Moabite country. While thus employed we find that he not only made himself master of Moab proper, but also took possession of a number of towns which, at the occupation of the Holy Land, had been seized and peopled by the Reubenites and Gadites—*e.g.*, Baal-Meon, Medeba, Kirjathaim, Ataroth, Nebo, Dibon, and Jahaz. The result was that Moab, on its re-establishment as an independent kingdom, was very much more powerful than it had ever been before the time of David, and became one of the most dreaded enemies of the Jews and Israelites during the later period of the two monarchies. Hence the numerous denunciations of the Moabites by the prophets of the later kingdoms, as Isaiah, Amos, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, who view Moab as one of the strongest and bitterest antagonists of the chosen people. *G. R.*

The ancient south road from Heshbon to Petra next passes *Dibon*, now Dhiban, about three and one half miles north of the Arnon, one of the most celebrated of the Reubenite cities, and now further remarkable for the discovery of the Moabite Stone. Originally belonging to Moab, it had been conquered by

Sihon (Num. 21 : 20), and fell to Israel on his destruction. It was first rebuilt and occupied by Gad, but finally allotted to Reuben from its situation. At the period of the later prophets,

like the rest of the district, it had been resumed by Moab, and is mentioned by Isaiah and Jeremiah in their denunciations of that people. *Tristram.*

## Section 8.

REIGN OF AHAB, 22 YEARS (BEGUN).

**38th of Asa to 18th of Jehoshaphat, of Judah.**

1 KINGS 16 : 29-34.

**16 : 29** AND in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel : and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and 30 two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD 31 above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter 32 of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And 33 he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made the Asherah ; and Ahab did yet more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to 34 anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him. In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho : he laid the foundation thereof with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub ; according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of Joshua the son of Nun.

**THE REIGN OF AHAB.** With the accession of Ahab a new main section of our history begins—the section which has its close in the destruction of the house of Omri by Jehu, as related in 2 Kings 10. And this reign is recorded at unusual length ; in fact, it occupies nearly all the remaining portion of this volume, whereas the reigns of preceding kings have in several instances been dismissed in a few verses. It owes this distinction to the ministry of the great prophet Elijah by which it was marked, and, indeed, was profoundly influenced ; but this ministry, it must be remembered, was necessitated by the critical circumstances of the time. No one can fail to see that this was one of the veritable turning-points of Jewish history. One of the real “decisive battles of the world”—that between the Lord and Baal—was then fought out. No wonder that our historian felt constrained to chronicle at length the transactions of a reign so pregnant both with good and evil for the people of the Lord and for the faith with which they had been put in trust. Indeed, the same guiding principle which led him to devote so many of his pages to the reign of Solomon, when the theocratic kingdom was

at its highest, impelled him to linger over the reign of Ahab when religion was at its lowest ebb. The secular historian, too often like the sun-dial which “counts no hours save those serene,” draws a veil over the time of his country’s decadence, or touches its misfortunes with a light hand. It is only in the inspired records that we have an impartial register both of the glory and shame of a commonwealth.

*Hammond.*

**29.** *The accession of Ahab, and the period of his reign.* The son of Omri, his reign began in the thirty-eighth year of Asa’s reign over Judah. This good King Asa had governed Judah in peace, while six kings of Israel had died after troublous reigns, two of them slain by their successors. Ahab’s reign of twenty-two years is more fully recorded than any other of the kings of Israel. The incidents of his history show that he had a strong character ; that he was an able ruler, a brave and skilful commander, a kingly esthetic, inasmuch as in one of many newly founded cities he built for himself an ivory palace, and incurred the guilt of murder that his gardens in Jezreel might be enlarged and beautified. Although more dar-

ingly wicked even than Jeroboam, yet he had periods of penitence under the appeals and threatenings of Jehovah.

**30-33.** *Ahab's extreme provocation of the God of Israel.* These verses sum up the points of this provocation, far exceeding the sins of Jeroboam. The image-worship set up by Jeroboam was a breach of the Second Commandment, for it was professedly designed to retain the worship of Jehovah under the form of a golden calf, itself a counterfeit presentment of the symbolic Shekinah. But Ahab, "as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam," added the yet more heinous sin of trampling under foot the First Commandment, that foremost, central principle which lay at the foundation of all reverence and obedience, *the sole worship of the one only living Jehovah.* Openly and utterly he renounced all allegiance to the true God, *the God of Israel,* "and went and served Baal, and worshipped him." *This was the master-crime of this boldest and guiltiest of Israel's monarchs.* This defiant rejection of the true God he dared to carry out by displacing the remaining semblance of His worship, and by erecting in its stead an altar and temple for Baal in Samaria. B.

**31.** Ahab, king of Israel, is represented as having sought to strengthen himself by a marriage with a foreign princess, and as having made choice for the purpose of "Jezebel, daughter of Eth-baal, king of the Zidonians." Here not only have we a genuine Phœnician name, but we have the name of a king who is proved by the Tyrian history of Menander to have been seated upon the throne exactly at this time. Eithobalus, the priest of Ashtaroath (or Venus), who by the murder of his predecessor, Pheles, became king of Tyre, mounted the throne just fifty years after the death of Hiram, the contemporary of Solomon. Ahab mounted the throne of Israel fifteen or twenty years later, and was thus the younger contemporary of Eithobalus, or Eth-baal, who continued to reign at Tyre during a considerable portion of Ahab's reign in Israel. G. R.

Ahab had the Divine law before him (Ex. 34:16), which distinctly forbade union with the Canaanites. Such a marriage was unprecedented in the kingdom of Israel, and was the more fatal because of the character of the queen, the Lady Macbeth of Scripture. She was reckless, fanatical and cruel, with a temper as vindictive as her will was resolute. Her husband became a tool in her hands. He could not foresee all the issues of his choice, but he knew the choice was sinful. P. C.

Hitherto the worship of Jehovah, though in an idolatrous form, had still been the national religion; but now the *worship of Baal and Ashera* was, at the instigation of the queen, set up in its stead, a temple built for Baal in Samaria itself, and (see especially 18:19) a vast number of the prophets of Baal and Ashera maintained among the people. Against the prophets of Jehovah, moreover, who must at that time have been numerous, a sanguinary persecution arose (verses 4, 13), and they were put to death whenever the queen could lay hands on them. Under these circumstances the people remained passive: they halted between two opinions, as Elijah expressed it—*i.e.*, they thought the worship of Jehovah and Baal compatible. At this period the conflict with triumphant heathenism was waged by the individual in whom was reflected the full glory of Old Testament prophetship—*viz.*, *Elijah* the Tishbite, "the Prophet of Fire, whose word burnt like a torch" (as the son of Sirach describes him, 48:1), and whose very name "Jehovah is my God" testified against the apostate and irresolute race. O.

Ahab represents the culminating point of the perversity of the kingdom of Israel. At once more able and more profane than his predecessors, he fostered to an unprecedented degree the corruption of morals, private and public injustice, and idolatrous practices. Ahab, prompted by Jezebel, became the more dangerous enemy of the cause of God. At this period of the national history arose the greatest of the prophets, Elijah, who well bore out his name—the strength of God—and who was the faithful type of John the Baptist, the immediate forerunner of Christ. In the coming of Elijah at such a crisis, we have an illustration of a general and permanent rule of God's kingdom. The excess of evil calls out the strongest manifestations of good. Never was the power of Satan more rampant than at the time when the Son of God appeared upon earth. So in the end of time, the day of Antichrist will be also the day in which Christ will intervene most directly in the great drama of history. *E. de P.*

**33. The Asherah.** This was probably a wooden image or symbol of Ashtaroath or Astarte, the chief female deity, as Baal (the Sun-god) was the chief male deity of the Phœnicians. By the Assyrians they were called Bel and Ishtar. As the sun represented Baal or Bel, the Moon or the planet Venus was the emblem of Ashtaroath. Every conceivable measure and method of licentiousness and cruelty were associated with the ritual and the temple-wor-

ship of these imaginary deities. And all these revolting and infamous rites Ahab established in his own capital city, from whence the corruption was easily diffused throughout the nation of Israel. And this he did when "he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal," the Phœnician king. Wife and worship, matched in the extreme of wickedness and infamy, he enthroned with himself; kindred sources of evil and agencies of destruction to the moral life and to the very continuance of the nation. Nor, as we read the story, was Ahab the mere weak compliant instrument of this imperious, fierce, vindictive woman, his chosen partner. Rather was Jezebel so chosen because her wilful, haughty, impious spirit, so exactly responded to his own. Many other wives had he, but Jezebel alone shared his throne and his counsels to the end, because of her oneness of nature, her reckless defiance of all Divine authority, and impious disregard of all right and purity and truth. Thus it was, by his own contempt of Jehovah in setting up a system of shameless idolatry, and by infusing this spirit of idolatry by example and authority in the practice and hearts of the whole people, that "Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him." B.

It was the first time that a king of Israel had allied himself by marriage with a heathen princess; and the alliance was in this case of a peculiarly disastrous kind. Jezebel has stamped her name on history as the representative of all that is designing, crafty, malicious, revengeful, and cruel. She is the first great instigator of persecution against the saints of God. Guided by no principle, restrained by no fear of either God or man, passionate in her attachment to her heathen worship, she spared no pains to maintain idolatry around her in all its splendor. Four hundred and fifty prophets ministered under her care to Baal, besides four hundred prophets of the groves which ate at her table (chap. 18:19). The idolatry, too, was of the most debased and sensual kind. The worship of Baal was combined with that of Ashtaroth, sometimes understood to be the moon, at other times to be the planet Venus. But whichever of the two she was, there can be no doubt as to the effect upon the people. *W. Milligan.*

The immediate consequence of this ill-fated union was, that the religion of Jezebel became the worship of the land of Israel. Ahab built in Samaria a temple to "the Baal"—the Sun-god (the producing principle in Nature)—in

which he erected not only an atar, but, as we gather from 2 K. 3:2; 10:27, also one of those pillars which were distinctive of its vile services. As usual, where these rites were fully carried out, he also "made the Asherah"—Ashtarte, the Moon-goddess (the receptive principle in Nature)—so that the Phœnician worship was now established in its entirety. As we infer from later notices, there was a "vestry" attached to these temples, where special festive garments, worn on great occasions, were kept (2 K. 10:22). Ahab—or perhaps rather Jezebel—appointed not less than four hundred and fifty priests of Baal and four hundred of Asherah, who were supported by the bounty of the queen. The forced introduction of this new worship led to a systematic persecution of the prophets, and even of the openly professed worshippers of Jehovah, which had their complete extermination for its object. A. E.

"The change from a symbolical worship of the One True God, with the innocent rites of sacrifice and prayer, to the cruel and licentious worship of the Phœnician divinities, was," as Dean Stanley observes, "*a prodigious step downward*, and left traces in Northern Palestine which no subsequent reformations were able to obliterate." "In earlier times," says Döllinger, "Baal had been worshipped without an image in Tyre and its colonies; but for a long time now his worship had grown into an idolatry of the most wanton character, directed by a numerous priesthood, who had their headquarters at Tyre. As the people of Asia distinguished, properly speaking, only two deities of nature, a male and a female, so Baal was of an elemental and sidereal character at once. As the former he was god of the creative power, bringing all things to life everywhere, and, in particular, god of fire; but he was Sun-god besides, and, as such, to human lineaments he added the crown of rays about the head peculiar to this god. In the one quality as well as in the other, he was represented at the same time as sovereign of the heavens (Baal-samin) and of the earth by him impregnated. The Canaanitish Moloch (king) was not essentially different from Baal, but the same god in his terrible and destroying aspect, the god of consuming fire, the burning sun who smites the land with unfruitfulness and pestilence, dries up the springs, and begets poisonous winds (Jer. 32:35; 19:5). In the Ashtarte (Ashtaroth) of the Western Asiatics we recognize that great nature-goddess standing by Baal's side, who is the regent of the stars, the Queen of Heaven,

and goddess of the moon, the mother of life, and deity of woman's fecundity." G. R.

34. *The rebuilding of Jericho by Hiel, and its predicted consequences fulfilled.* To prove that "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise," to attest to all in after time the certainty of God's threatened judgments, however long the interval between the utterance and the fulfilment, is the object of this brief record. A curse had been pronounced by Joshua four hundred and forty years before upon the man who should rebuild the walls of Jericho after they had miraculously fallen and thus given entrance to the besieging host of Israel. Hiel, a native of Bethel, under the infection of idolatry, no longer believing in the God of Israel, deliberately disregarded the Divine judgment announced by Joshua. That judgment was now fulfilled in punishment of this daring rebuilder of an accursed city. In a manner which is not related, his eldest and youngest sons perished, one at the outset, the other at the completion of the rebuilding of the walls of Jericho. And a fearful warning it was to the whole nation, not to despise the long suffering and patience of God. But the nation heeded not the warning. B.

The reign of Ahab must be regarded as, on the whole, a time of material prosperity for Israel. Besides the two triumphs over Syria we find the kingdom otherwise advancing in wealth and consequence. New towns of importance arose both in the north and in the south, as Jezreel in the Esdraëlon plain, and Jericho, low down in the Ghor or Jordan valley. Joshua had in the olden time laid a curse on the man who should rebuild this city (Josh. 6 : 26)—the first in Canaan to resist Israel—and the menace had been effective for centuries ; but in Ahab's reign a certain Hiel, a native of Bethel, set the curse at naught, and raised Jericho from its ruins, paying, however, in the deaths of two of his sons, the penalty affixed prophetically. The site of Jericho was most favorable, and the "city of palm-trees" soon became a flourishing place, but was not for a long time of the same importance as Jezreel. Jezreel, "planted on a gentle eminence, in the very centre of the rich plain, commanding the view of Carmel on the west and of the valley of the Jordan on the east," was made a royal residence ; strengthened with walls and towers ; adorned with a palace, a temple, and perhaps an "ivory house ;" and continued till the end of the dynasty the ordinary seat of the court and place of abode of the sovereign. Following in the footsteps of his father Omri, his aim was to in-

crease at once the internal dignity and the external prosperity of Israel. He loved peace and the arts of peace. His fame as a builder of cities and of palaces received particular notice in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (1 K. 22 : 39). Among the latter was his new palace at Jezreel, which, with its extensive gardens, was to prove so fatal a spot in the history of his family ; while either there or at Samaria he erected for himself that "ivory house" which appears to have attracted, in a greater than ordinary degree, the admiration of men. Ewald remarks that "in the time of Solomon ivory was first used for a chair of state ; Ahab decorated with it an entire house." To nothing, however, does Ahab appear to have devoted himself more than to extending the commercial prosperity of Israel, and it was in connection with this that the weaker side of his character and the more evil influences of his reign appeared. He was thus led to draw closer the bonds of friendship between himself and the powerful Phœnicians in the West. His marriage with Jezebel is in no small degree to be traced to the same cause. G. R.

*Points of Special Instruction.* The first respects the eminent fitness of the negative or *prohibitory form* of the Ten Commandments. They all exactly match man's case, in striking at the fact and the very forms of actual human transgression. Thou shalt have no other gods ; thou shalt not make graven images ! What a comment upon the necessity and fitness of these Divine commands is contained in the entire history of this kingdom of Israel !

This history further shows that the *first* and *second* Commandments are the vital and essential ones. In their negative form they imply the controlling presence of that *love to God* which Christ affirmed to be the *first and great Commandment*. The worship of God in spirit and truth is the foremost simplest outflow of supreme love to Him. Neglect of such worship attends upon the want or withdrawal of love. And *neglect* leads, through disregard and disobedience, to positive rejection, and the enthronement of some other object of love and worship. Rejection soon transforms indifference to hate, and disobedience to revolt and defiance. And defiance is the forerunner of final destruction. So was it with Ahab. So will it be with every one who disregards and disobeys the great Commandment of love to God in Christ ; with every one who allows an idolatrous affection for any being or object to displace supreme devotion to Him. Though the time of image-worship has passed, subtler forms



of idolatrous affection abide as the chief sources of peril, as occasions and means of spiritual downfall and ruin. This lesson of the history always and sadly needs our pondering.

Idolatry substituted a false for a true conception of the nature, the relations, and the requirements of God. Its effect was to pervert the reason, to stupefy the conscience, to nullify the force of law, and obliterate all sense of duty toward God; and thus of necessity to exclude all idea of obligation between man and man. Its natural outcome could only be a character altogether vicious, a life wholly beast-like, mastered by self-seeking and malevolence, by rapacity and strife, by lust and cruelty. Such was the outcome of Ahab's daring and defiant introduction of Baal-worship among the people of Israel. How enormous, then, his sin and guilt, and how immeasurable the abhorrence of such iniquity on the part of a God immaculately pure! B.

Family life is closely linked with religious life. Unequal yoking with unbelievers is as bad for religion as it often is for domestic quiet. A Jezebel can do much mischief to a family into which she comes—to the whole circle, be it wide or narrow, which is cursed by her activity. She may be "clever," of high standing, of influential connections, of great force, very attractive, on her own lines very generous and public-spirited (see how bountifully Jezebel provided for her priests and her worship); but she is a curse, and the consequences to those submitting to her influence can only be bad. Let the young be profoundly thankful where God has given them Christian parents. And let them aim at the perpetuation of a godly family life. The violation of this principle brought Ahab and his family, including Jezebel, to desolation. *J. Hall.*

In their successive and similar careers, Jeroboam, Omri, and Ahab strongly emphasize the inevitable and downward progress of the wicked in iniquity. Omri *walked in* the sin of Jeroboam, *went farther* in the practice of evil. He "*wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord.*" Although he evinced judgment and taste in the building of Samaria, and the fruits of his energy and enterprise were many, yet in his own inner life as seen by the omniscient Lord, and

in his defilement of the nation's worship, he wrought *only evil*, and that to the end. Ever accumulating guilt for himself, he transmitted, through the force of example and training, yet more fearful guilt and misery to his son after him. Jeroboam was notably wicked in that he first "*made Israel to sin.*" Omri was "*worse than all before him.*" And Ahab went far in advance of Omri his father. Each carried the whole nation down into deeper corruption, and involved it in final utter destruction. Thus it was in this ancient, true, and typical history. Thus it is in current history, personal and national. Sin is invariably progressive, and the progress ends inevitably in ruin.

Jehovah's relations and dealings with the nation Israel are simply an illustration of his relations and dealings with every other nation. The principles directing and governing His action toward communities or peoples are always and everywhere the same. Outward national prosperity He has ever conditioned upon national morality; and true morality, personal and national, springs solely from a pure religion, a religion based upon divinely instituted laws and worship. Obedience and reverence toward God, grateful service and worshipful devotion, joined with righteous, unselfish, and helpful dealing toward men, comprise the fundamental conditions upon which depend the prospering favor of God, alike upon nations and individuals. Again and again throughout the Old Testament histories does He expressly affirm these principles to rulers and peoples, pre-eminently to the successive kings of Judah and Israel. And not only the entire record of the Israelitish people, from Moses to the latest monarch of Judah, but the whole subsequent history of nations affords an unbroken comment upon the absolute truthfulness of these principles. Let then the sense of obligation to God be habitually cherished, and let His law of righteous and truthful living, of unselfish and helpful dealing, be the rule of personal and national action. And let the practice of a pure, heartfelt scriptural worship be more and more widely extended over our vast inheritance. So shall the prospering favor of God, already so richly realized, be perpetuated and increased with our swiftly multiplying numbers. B.

## Section 9.

ELIJAH ANNOUNCES DROUGHT TO AHAB; RETIRES TO THE BROOK CHERITH, THEN TO ZAREPHATH. THE WIDOW'S TRUSTFUL FIDELITY; HER CHILD RESTORED.

1 KINGS 17: 1-24.

1 AND Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, 2 but according to my word. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before 4 Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the 5 ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for 6 he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the 7 brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

8, 9 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to 10 sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow woman was there gathering sticks: and he called to her, and said, 11 Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12 And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go 13 in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it 14 forth unto me, and afterward make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the 15 day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the say- 16 ing of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days. The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he 17 spake by Elijah. And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in 18 him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? thou art 19 come unto me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son! And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into the chamber, 20 where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying 21 her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and 22 said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the LORD hearkened unto the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he 23 revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the 24 house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

THE picture which the historian has just drawn of the shameless idolatry and the gross degeneracy of the earlier part of Ahab's reign forms a fit prelude to an account of the ministry of the great prophet Elijah, which occupies this and several succeeding chapters; for the two stand together in the closest connection.

It was only the unprecedented corruption of that age which necessitated such a mission, and a mission armed with such credentials as his. It will be obvious to the most cursory reader that the narratives comprised in the remaining portion of this book and the earlier part of 2 Kings are of a very different character from

those which have so far been before us. The ministry of Elijah and Elisha alike is little more than a series of miracles. Of their words comparatively few are recorded; we hear of little but the signs and wonders that they wrought. Neither Elijah nor Elisha, as Ewald has observed, "originated anything essentially new," but the task assigned them was one which needed supernatural support and attestation, no less than the promulgation of a new law or gospel. It was their work, at the very darkest hour in the spiritual history of Israel, when a determined effort was being made to stamp out the faith of God's elect, when the nation chosen of God to be the depositary of His truth was fast lapsing into heathenism and into unutterable abominations, it was their work to witness for God and truth and purity. If God's purposes of grace to our world which had been ripening from age to age were not now to be frustrated; if the one lamp which cast a ray on the world's thick darkness was not to be utterly extinguished, then, as far as we can see, God must send special messengers, and arm them, in token of their mission and authority, with superhuman powers. The age demanded the messenger; the messenger must have credentials; the credentials could only be miraculous. *Hammond.*

This darkest night of Israel's spiritual declension was broken by the appearance of the greatest of all the prophets since Moses, and the type of that great preacher of repentance who was the forerunner of the Christ. *Elijah the Tishbite* has been well called "the grandest and the most romantic character that Israel ever produced. He meets us with a suddenness as startling as the first appearance of John the Baptist preaching repentance in the wilderness of Judea. There is not a word of his parentage; and of his birthplace we only know that it was in the land of Gilead east of Jordan. But this one fact accounts for the prophet's outward peculiarities. Like Jephthah among the judges, he came of a wild, uncultured, pastoral race, whose mode of life had become more and more assimilated to that of the Bedouins of the neighboring desert, and who retained great force of character and power of physical endurance. His only clothing was a girdle of skin round his loins, and the "mantle," or cape, of sheepskin, the descent of which upon Elisha has passed into a proverb. Sheltered from Jezebel's persecution in the solitudes of Mount Gilead, he had been prepared by Jehovah for his mission to the apostate king and people. P. S.

Like the Baptist in a subsequent age, Elijah was a prophet of the wilderness. The conditions of his work necessitated his frequent seclusion in the desert, in some near exile, or in some secure hiding-place, whence he issued forth, whenever occasion demanded it, to deliver his lofty protest, and to offer his single-handed defiance to Ahab. Like the Baptist, too, he wore the primitive garb of a man of the desert—a mantle of skin thrown loosely over him, and secured round his waist by a leathern girdle. He was of little account in an estimate of physical forces, but among the moral forces of the world he was one of the greatest. His temperament corresponded. A man of quick, fiery impulses, extreme in his emotional fluctuations; bold as a lion in the hour of duty and conflict, and capable of intense excitement, and then giving way to corresponding depression. *Allon.*

Ahab far outdistanced even his father's wickedness, first by entering into a matrimonial alliance with the vile dynasty of Ethbaal, and then by formally making the worship of Baal the established religion of Israel, with all of vileness and of persecution which this implied. In these circumstances, surely, we may look for extraordinary interposition on the part of Jehovah. For, with such a king and queen, and with a people, not only deprived of the Temple services and the Levitical priesthood, but among whom the infamous rites of Baal and Astarte had become the established worship, ordinary means would manifestly have been in vain. Again and again had messengers sent from God spoken His Word and announced His judgments, without producing even a passing effect. It needed more than this, if the worship of Baal was to be effectually checked. Accordingly, this period of Israel's history is also marked by a great extension of the *prophetic order and mission*. It was theirs to keep alive the knowledge of Jehovah in the land; theirs also to meet the gross and daring idolatry of king and people by a display of *power* which could neither be resisted nor gainsaid. Hence the unparalleled frequency of miracles, mostly intended to prove the vainness of idols as against the power of the living God, the reality of the prophets' mission, and of the authority which the Lord had delegated to His messengers. Only thus could any effect be produced. It was an extraordinary period—and God raised up in it an extraordinary agency. Hence the unusual accumulation of the miraculous—and that chiefly in its aspect of power—as displayed by an Elijah and an Elisha, so far from seem-

ing strange or unaccountable, appears eminently called for. A. E.

At this period the prophets act their most prominent and important part in Jewish history, particularly in that of Israel, where the Levites having been expelled, and the priesthood degraded, they remained the only defenders of the law and religion of the land. Prophecy, in its more extensive meaning, comprehended the whole course of religious education; and as the Levitical class were the sole authorized conservators and interpreters of the law, the prophets were usually of that tribe, or at least persons educated under their care. Now, however, they assume a higher character, and appear as a separate and influential class in the State. They are no longer the musicians, poets, and historians of the country, but men full of a high and solemn enthusiasm, the moral and religious teachers of the people. The most eminent are described as directly, and sometimes suddenly, designated for their office by divine inspiration, endowed with the power of working miracles, and of foretelling future events. But, setting aside their divine commission, the prophets were the great constitutional patriots of the Jewish State, the champions of virtue, liberty, justice, and the strict observance of the civil and religious law, against the iniquities of the kings and of the people. In no instance do they fall beneath, often they rise above, the lofty and humane morals of the Mosaic Institutes. They are always on the side of the oppressed; they boldly rebuke but never factiously insult their kings; they defend, but never flatter the passions of the people. In no instance does one of the acknowledged seers, like the turbulent demagogues of the Grecian or Roman republics, abuse his popular influence for his own personal aggrandizement or authority. *Milman.*

1. *Elijah's first startling appearance and message to Ahab.* In Israel, irreligion had reached the height of shameless impiety. Baal-worship, or idolatry of the vilest and most blasphemous character, had been enforced upon the people by fierce and murderous persecution—the first on record for a pure faith in God. Under the sacrilegious inspiration of Ahab and Jezebel, these kindred royal rulers, the altars of Jehovah had been overthrown, His prophets and servants slain. The great mass of the people, too, were utterly given up to corrupt and horrible abominations. At this point it was, when the iniquity of king, queen and nation was at its highest, that God once more interposes, by raising up and qualifying one man

for a signal mission of merciful warning. As needful, He confronts these strong-willed royal spirits with one of even greater might and sternness of soul; one whose faith and courage never once yielded to extreme personal peril; one whose name—meaning *Jehovah my God*—indicated the object of his trust, and the source of his dauntless courage.

The story of Elijah is one of the grandest personal histories of the Old Testament. Confessedly at the head of the prophets and reformers in the sublimer aspects of character, especially in strength of faith and of endurance, he can be matched with no other than Moses, the great lawgiver and leader. As these twain mighty spirits were most eminent in work wrought for God, so they impressed themselves most deeply and abidingly upon the entire Jewish people. Most remarkable was this in the case of Elijah, for *his direct* work was confined to the ten tribes of Israel who soon became extinct. Yet so strong and vivid continued the memory of his character and deeds, that when the Lord of glory appeared on earth the Jews said, "It is Elias!" With Moses, too, Elijah shared the transfiguration of Jehovah Jesus on the holy mount.

Of Elijah's origin nothing is told save that he came from the wild hill country of Gilead east of Jordan, lying between Moab on the south and Bashan on the north. His birth, parentage, training and history up to full age, are unrecorded. With sudden startling words he first announces his presence to Ahab, as though he were an angel from heaven instantaneously appearing and sharply uttering the rebuke of Jehovah.

With the most solemn and sublime asseveration of human speech, the prophet affirms the living Jehovah still to be the only God of Israel, though Ahab had rejected him for false and impotent idol-gods. Then he proclaims to the impious monarch *God's interdict upon the land of Israel.* "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand [thus likening himself to an angel of the Divine presence], there shall not be rain nor dew these years, but according to my word," or through my intercession, as his meaning is interpreted by James 5:17. Upon the early and latter rains, and during the long intervals upon the regularity and abundance of the heavy dews, the productiveness of the land depended. The withdrawal of both rain and dew was one of the punishments threatened in case of apostasy (De. 28:23, 24). And the effect of such withdrawal, even for a short period, involved the extreme

of suffering from famine. No reason does Elijah assign for his coming or message. None was needed, for Ahab knew it to be the message of an offended God. Therefore with the utterance of this fearful warning, awaiting no reply, the prophet as suddenly disappears from the monarch's presence. B.

He stood before the Lord God of Israel; and in the consciousness of that presence to stand before Ahab was as nothing. His word is abrupt, pithy, terrible—a bolt suddenly and unerringly shot—and it was the manner of speech of his entire ministry. And it is characteristic of Elijah that he neither fears nor falters. His word is as bold as it is momentous. His well-chosen word affirms the very heart of the theocratic faith. He stood before the Lord God the prophet of repentance, the restorer of the Covenant; he knows no reserves, he admits no compromise. It is surely one of the most audacious words ever spoken. No word of Moses to Pharaoh is bolder. With one stroke he breaks down the bridge behind him. It is one of those conjunctions of king and prophet, physical force and moral, armed power and dauntless faith, of which the religious history of the world records so many instances—Moses before Pharaoh, Christ before Pilate, the apostles before the Sanhedrim, Paul before Felix, Luther at Worms. There is no reason to doubt that this was the absolute beginning of Elijah's public career. It is in harmony with all the dramatic movements of his history, and is incompatible with any supposition of quiet preparation. It was a bold challenge to Ahab, as of an ambassador sent, not to debate a treaty, but to deliver an ultimatum. *Allon.*

With the suddenness of a flash of lightning and a clap of thunder out of an Eastern sky Elijah the prophet bursts upon us in the narrative of the Old Testament. As he was taken away when his work was done, in a chariot of fire with horses of fire going up by a whirlwind into heaven, so it may be said he came. Everything was going on in Israel in its ordinary way. The people were at peace; and nothing seems to have disturbed their king as he pursued the evil courses on which he had embarked. All at once Elijah appears upon the scene. With the very first mention made of him he is before us in all the fulness of his mission and in all the strength of that bold, uncompromising character which he ever afterward displayed. . . . Elijah's work was very different from that of Moses, and no less different from that of Samuel. At his hands no new polity was needed. He had to frame no new

laws. His work, it may be almost said, was to be summarized in one great act; in so far as it was done in the sight of men, it was to be begun and completed in a day. We do not, therefore, need to be informed as to his early training. Enough, if we know that, in communion with God and his own heart, he learned what no schools and no mere intercourse with men can teach—the greatness of the one Creator and Ruler of all; that faith in the Divine power which makes him feel, along with the deepest sense of his own weakness, that he can say to the mountain before him, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea;" and that superiority to the shows and fashions of a fleeting world which communion with the everlasting hills, and with Him who planted them or shakes them at His pleasure, is so well fitted to impart. W. M.

Faith is the great word to be written in the forefront of Elijah's history. He was "a man of like passions as we are"—tempted as we are, open as we are to joy and pain—yet of him, of all men that had lived since "the father of the faithful," it was of him most eminently true that "he staggered not at the promises" or commands "of God through unbelief." The chapter before us is full of faith—nothing but faith. *Kitto.*

**The Lord liveth, before whom I stand.** How distinct and abiding must the vision of God have been which burned before the inward eye of the man that struck out that phrase! Wherever I am, whatever I do, I am before Him. To my purged eye there is the Apocalypse of heaven, and I behold the great throne, and the solemn ranks of ministering spirits, my fellow-servants, hearkening to the voice of His word. No excitement of work, no strain of effort, no distraction of circumstances, no glitter of gold, or dazzle of earthly brightness, dimmed that vision for this prophet. A. M.—To be an instrument for the accomplishment of the Divine will, and for the glorifying of His name, was his ardent desire; he could say, with Isaiah's watchman, "Lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and I am set in my ward whole nights" (Isa. 21 : 8). His life was a hearkening to God's voice; he passed his days in the presence of his Eternal King, and, "Lord, speak! for Thy servant heareth," was his watchword. Such was Elijah, by the grace of God, and thus did he stand before the Lord God of Israel. *Krummacher.*

An habitual attitude of the soul is pointed at in Elijah's language. To hold constant inter-

course with God, to become familiar with Him, to have always an open ear for His words, to be always ready to listen to and proclaim His pleasure was the spirit of the prophet's life. Hence his authority; hence his strength. Before one who could and did so live, earthly distinctions faded. W. M.

**There shall not be dew nor rain.**

Elijah here boldly predicted a long drought to Ahab, not to be removed "but according to his word"—that is, *by his intercession*. He apprehended that the idolatries of the nation would draw down destruction from God, and therefore prayed for a lesser chastisement to work its reformation. And when that end was accomplished, he prayed again for its remission. So it is understood by the son of Sirach, *Ecclus.* 48:10, and also in the New Testament, "Elias prayed earnestly that it might not rain: he prayed again and the heaven gave rain." *Hales*.

It was all most startling: the sudden, strange, wild apparition; the bold confronting of king and people there in Samaria; the announcement apparently so incredible in itself, and in such contrast to the scene of wealth and fruitfulness all around; the unexpected pronouncement of the name Jehovah in such a place; the authority which he pleaded and the power which he claimed—in general, even the terms of his message: "Lives Jehovah, the God of Israel, which I stand before His face! If there be these years dew or rain, except by the mouth [the spoken means] of my word!" What answer Ahab made, what impression it produced on him or his people, Holy Scripture, in its Divine self-consciousness and sublime indifference to what may be called "effect," does not condescend even to notice. Nay, here also silence is best—and the prophet himself must withdraw as suddenly as he had come, hide himself from human ken, not be within reach of question or answer, and let God work, alone and unseen. An absolute pause with that thunder-cloud overhead—unremoved and apparently unremovable—in presence of which man and Baal shall be absolutely powerless: such was the fitting sequence to Elijah's announcement. A. E.

2-7. *By God's command Elijah dwells for a year by the brook Cherith, and is fed by ravens.* Eastward from Samaria, as bidden by the Lord, he goes, and conceals himself from the king's search by the brook Cherith, near the Jordan. Without question or hesitancy "he went and did according to the word of the Lord." The hiding was not of Elijah's seeking through lack

of courage. It was at God's own bidding. During the long interval (three years) of drought, the prophet was to abide in seclusion. This concealment was for his personal protection from Ahab's vengeance, and for his relief from importunity by the suffering people. It was also that Elijah might have opportunity to put God's pledges of deliverance and help to actual test, and so be himself assured of His power and faithfulness; and that Jehovah might test and prove and confirm Elijah's faith during the three years' process of teaching and training him for the grand mission of his prolonged life. The prophet's first home was in one of the many caverns beneath the steep mountain-cliff, and beside the yet flowing brook. Here in solitary thought, and holding communion only with God, he waits further Divine direction. And God not only protects His servant in this hiding-place, but by means the most improbable, supernaturally provides him with bread and flesh. Morning and night, a whole year round, carrion birds, whose instinct is to snatch away meat from others, who even abandon their own young to God's care (*Job* 38:41), whose rapacity and greed are notably excessive, are constrained to deny their own natures, and bring the best of their getting for the prophet's sustenance. And this surpassing marvel, whatever else its design for those that read the story, brought sustenance to Elijah's spirit as well; for the daily visits of the ravens assured his faith of God's abiding presence, and confirmed his conviction that present inaction was his duty. So, too, in this quiet, solitary retreat God carried on a needful training process in the prophet's soul, preparing him for great achievement. B.

God prepares men for great deeds by great trial, and tests His weapons severely before using. But these long years among the wild scenery of the desert were all building up character. Solitude is the mother country of the strong; and, in some form or other, every man who has done much for God and his fellows has had to be "in the deserts till the day of his shewing." A. M.—It is remarkable how God's elect messengers, each in his turn, have been sent "apart into a desert place to rest awhile." Moses must spend forty years in the great and terrible wilderness; must spend forty days and forty nights in Horeb, the Mount of God. Elijah himself only emerges from the Cherith to go to another hiding-place at Zarephath, and again he passes to the same wilderness and the same mount where Moses was. The Baptist's life was almost divided between the

desert and the prison. Paul must learn his gospel in Arabia. *Hammond.*

The desert was, from the time of Moses to the days of John the Baptist, the great school of the prophets. These men of God were trained for their work: 1. By being brought face to face with their sacred mission in all its greatness, and free from the prejudices and petty influences of human society. There they could steadfastly contemplate the Divine ideal, undistracted by the rude realities of man's fallen condition. 2. There they were also cut off from human aid, left to test their own strength, or rather to prove their own utter weakness, and, overwhelmed with the sense of it, to cast themselves wholly on Divine strength. Thus they received directly from God, as did Elijah, the supplies by which they lived, and realized the conditions of absolute and immediate trust in Him. 3. This loving converse of the prophets with their God brought them into closer fellowship, more intimate union, with Him. Thus they came forth from the desert, like Moses from the Mount of Sinai, bearing unconsciously upon them the reflection of His glory. As Paul says, "We, beholding as with open face the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Considerations like these have a fit application to the pastor, who ought to be much in solitary communion with God in order to be raised above the compromises of principle so common in society, and to get his whole nature permeated with Divine strength. Every Christian soul has in like manner a prophet's mission, and ought therefore often to seek the desert solitude in which the Invisible is brought near, and to frequent those sacred mountain-tops of prayer where the disciple, like the Master, renews his strength. *E. de P.*

To Elijah it may have been of the utmost consequence to see that, in the very moment of his severest trial, nature and the God of nature were on his side; and nothing could more effectually convey that lesson to him than the service of these unclean and ravenous birds. Morning after morning, evening after evening, bread and flesh were there. Could he fail to remember the manna and the quails with which God had of old fed His people in their wanderings, or the streams of water with which in the desert He had quenched their thirst? His position was precisely analogous to theirs. In such circumstances the old histories of his nation would unquestionably come back upon him with renewed freshness and power. In

like manner would the living God now deal with him. There was strength, comfort, joy, hope, in the thought. W. M.

**S-16.** *By another Divine command, Elijah abides for two years and a half with the widow of Zarephath.* His prediction to Ahab had come to pass. Moisture had ceased to fall from heaven. The earth was scorched, and its herbage withered. The flow of the rivulets was checked, and the streams were dried. And God will not open an unfailing spring to give the prophet's brook miraculous supply; for this would cross His purpose toward the people, and attract unwelcome visitors to the place of Elijah's concealment. So the word of the Lord bade him take the long journey (forty miles) to Zarephath or Sarepta, a town on the seacoast between Tyre and Sidon. There in Jezebel's heathen land he could dwell, safe alike from Ahab's violence or importunity; while the horror of the famine was deepening, and the anguish of the people becoming more intense. As before God had said of the ravens, so here He assures the prophet, "*I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*" In either case *He secured* the fulfilment of His word by methods and influences suited to the instrument or the agent employed. So He ever chooses *fitting* agents, instruments, and opportunities for the bringing of His will to pass.

True to His purpose, fulfilling only *His* will, are all conjunctions of events. Therefore at the moment of Elijah's arrival at the gate of Sarepta, *behold the widow woman was there*, gathering sticks for the cooking of her last meal. Weary and famished with his long foot travel, he is yet alert to discover if this be his appointed helper. The woman's instant movement in response to his simple request for water, was indication enough to induce his further request for bread. The solemn asseveration of the woman at the outset of her answer, "*As the Lord thy God liveth,*" shows that she recognized Elijah as an Israelite, and a servant of the God of Israel; and in her whole touching reply the inspired prophet saw that this was the woman to whom he had been sent.

A special inspiration directed his response—a response which sharply tested, while it stimulated and encouraged, the woman's faith. "*Supply my hunger first out of the little thou hast, and afterward prepare for thyself and for thy son.* For the Lord God of Israel hath said that thy meal shall not waste, nor thy cruse of oil fail, until the Lord send rain upon the earth." Taking the word of Elijah as the word of the living God, without a moment's doubt

or demur, with a faith of kindred simplicity and sublimity to the faith of that other Phœnician mother who victoriously wrestled in pleading with Christ, "she went and did according to the saying of Elijah." In the utterly self-consecrating spirit of the poor widow who in Christ's presence gave her little all for the Temple service, this widowed mother willingly denied herself and her son their little remnant of food, that she might give to the man of God, in the assured trust that the Lord would make full return. And in thus doing, "she bore as nobly as Elijah all tests brought to bear on her faith. He could truly have said, 'I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.' Consequently, to none of the many widows of Israel was Elijah sent save to her."

Thus signally anticipating the New Testament spirit, and proving the New Testament truth that "there is that scattereth and yet increaseth," "she and he and her house" for two and a half years were fed from the un-wasting barrel of meal and the un-failing cruse of oil. So God commanded a blessing upon her ready trust and willing obedience to His word, as spoken by the mouth of His servant. And so He prepared a restful home for the lonely prophet. Through undisturbed communion with God, and long study of His ways with His people, and of the course that people had pursued and were pursuing, the prophet's training in faith and fortitude, in consecration and courage, was advanced. Thus was he girded with needful inward might for his sublime mission as the sole champion of Jehovah against the rebellious court and people of Israel. B.

It is difficult to know which most to wonder at: Elijah's calmness, consistency, and readiness of faith, or the widow's almost incredible simplicity of trustfulness. Elijah did not hesitate to go on with the trial of his hostess to the end; least of all, was he afraid of the possible consequences. As in every real trial of our trust, there was first a general promise, and, on the ground of it, a specific demand, followed by an assurance to conquering faith ("the cad of meal shall not come to an end, nor the cruse of oil fail"). But, if it was as he told her, why this demand in its sharply trying severity: *first*, to use for Elijah part of the very little she had, and to bring it to him, and only after that to go back and prepare for herself and her son? Needless, indeed, the trial would seem, except as a test of her faith; yet not a mere test, since if she stood it and inherited the promise, it would be such confirmation of it, such help and blessing to her—alike spiritually and temporally

—as to constitute the beginning of a new life. And so it ever is; and therefore does every specific demand upon our faith stand between a general promise and a special assurance, that, resting upon the one, we may climb the other; and thus every specific trial—and every trial is also one of our faith—may become a fresh starting-point in the spiritual life.

And the widow of Sarepta obeyed. It requires no exercise of imagination to realize what her difficulties in so doing must have been. One thing at least is clear: that this heathen woman, whose knowledge of Jehovah could only have been rudimentary and incipient, and who yet, at the word of a stranger, could give up her own and her son's last meal, because a prophet had bidden it, and promised her miraculous supply for the future, must have had the most simple childlike trustfulness in the God of Israel. What a lesson this, and how full of comfort, to Elijah! There *was* faith not only in Israel, but wherever He had planted its seed. Elijah had spread the wings of the God of Israel's promise (1 K. 17:14), and this poor heathen had sought shelter under them. There, almost hourly these many "days," the promise proved true, and, day by day, as when Israel gathered the manna in the wilderness, did an unseen Hand provide—and that not only for herself and her son, but for all "her household." It was a constant miracle; but then we need, and we have a God who doeth wonders—not one of the idols of the heathen nor yet a mere abstraction, but the Living and the True God. And we need in our Bible such a story as this, to give us the pledge of personal assurance, when our hearts well-nigh sink within us in the bitter trials of life—something which to all time may serve as evidence that Jehovah reigneth, and that we can venture our all upon it. And yet as great as this miracle of daily providing seems that other of the faith of the widow of Sarepta! A. E.

Elijah must learn that the God of Israel had a wider plan, and was animated by a larger and more universal love than he supposed. Such is the point of view under which we are to regard the narrative occupying the remainder of this chapter. Our Lord has Himself given us its key. When, at the close of His first sermon in Nazareth, His hearers would have demanded of Him that, whatsoever they had heard of as done at Capernaum, He should do also in His own country, He replied, "Of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a



great famine over all the land ; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." These words disclose the light in which we are to look at the incident as recorded here. Not the sustenance afforded by the widow to the prophet, but that afforded through the prophet to her and to her child, is intended to occupy our thoughts. Not the lesson of dependence upon God is that now taught him whom the Almighty was preparing for His coming work, but the further lesson that, however he may have thought of judgment only as his work, he had a mission of mercy to perform and one too of the widest and most comprehensive kind. W. M.

The purpose of God in sending Elijah to the poor widow was to show him, before he entered on the great conflict with idolatry, that he had at his disposal a Divine power which nothing would be able to resist. Elijah was, so to speak, to prove his arms, far from human observation, BY A PASSAGE OF DEEP PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. Hence the double miracle of the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil always full. Hence, yet more distinctly, that glorious miracle of the raising of the widow's son by the prophet. This miracle had no witnesses ; nor must we marvel at this. God does not perform miracles to fascinate onlookers ; He does not make a spectacle of His marvellous working. His glory is sufficiently magnified in the deliverance of a humble believer, like the widow of Sarepta, and in the qualification of the prophet for his mission. Jesus Christ refused to work any miracles for show, and the sublimest manifestations of His power were reserved for humble hearts and lowly dwellings. Elijah has learned to know the strength of God which is in him ; he has proved it in the secrecy of his soul. This intimate personal experience of the grace of God is of incomparable value to His servants. If we would have Divine strength to use in the great conflict with sin around us, we must prove its miraculous energy in our private life. And let us remember also that our homes may be the scene of the mightiest manifestations of the grace of God, and of the most signal providential deliverances, if only our hearts be open to Him in humility and love, like the heart of the widow of Sarepta. *E. de P.*

**17-24.** Most touching and instructive is this incident of the restoration to life of the widow's dead son. Her sore grief, wakening her conscience to a sense of past sin, leads her to expostulate earnestly with the prophet, as the one who had brought this great calamity upon

her. Elijah makes her no reply, but takes that very expostulation to God and pleads in her behalf. Here is the same boldness with God that he showed with king and people. But, in both cases, it is a holy boldness that came of an invincible faith in the promise and power of God. His pleading is like that of Moses, as personal and bold. He asked for a miracle directly involving creative power ; one that had never before been wrought—a life to be given back from death. He asked it without condition or limitation. And God heard and answered the prayer. He restored life to the dead child. What a basis of unsurpassed faith had this bold entreaty ! How grandly it illustrates the marvellous promise of Christ concerning the uprooting of mountains in response to such full living faith ! The result not only rejoiced the mother's heart, but won a fuller confession of faith, and wrought a deeper experience of trust in this Divine restorer. The true end of miracles, which is the confirmation of truth, was attained in the case of this half-taught but God-fearing woman. B.

**17.** Not from the thought of any particular transgression of which she had been guilty, but because the tokens of something Divine were immediately before her eyes, did the widow of Zarephath turn to Elijah with the cry, "Thou art come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son." W. M.

In the agony of prayer he cast this burden upon his God. Three times—as when the name of Jehovah is laid in blessing on His people (Num. 6 : 24), and as when the Seraphim raise their voice of praise (Isa. 6 : 3)—he stretched himself in symbolic action upon the child, calling upon Jehovah as his God ; laying the living upon the dead, pouring his life, as it were, into the child, with the agony of believing prayer. But it was *Jehovah* who restored the child to life, hearkening to the voice of His servant. A. E.

Instead of chiding the Sareptan, out of the fervency of his soul he humbly expostulates with his God. His only remedy is in his prayer : that which shut heaven for rain must open it for life. Every word enforceth ; first he pleads his interest in God, "O Lord my God ;" then the quality of the patient, a "widow," and therefore both most distressed with the loss and most peculiar to the charge of the Almighty ; then his interest, as in God, so in this patient, "With whom I sojourn," as if the stroke were given to himself ; and lastly, the quality of the punishment, "By slaying her son," the only comfort of her life.

Neither doth his tongue move thus only. Thrice doth he stretch himself upon the dead body, as if he could wish to infuse of his own life into the child; and so often calls to his God for the restitution of that soul. What can Elijah ask, to be denied? "The Lord heard the voice of the prophet; the soul of the child came into him again and he revived." What miracle is impossible to faithful prayers? There cannot be more difference betwixt Elijah's devotion and ours than betwixt supernatural and ordinary acts; if he therefore obtained miraculous favors by his prayers, do we doubt of those which are within the sphere of nature and use? What could we want if we did not slack to ply heaven with our prayers? *Bp. H.*

Remember that the most marked characteristic of Elijah was the indomitable character of his faith. Our Lord says, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the VIOLENT TAKE IT BY FORCE." Now Elijah was one of those who take the kingdom of heaven by force—who storm its crystal walls in unconquerable faith, and batter them with prayers that will not be denied. To use fitly the compulsive prayers of Elijah, it is needful to have Elijah's faith—just as only one who wrestles till break of day as Jacob did, could dare to say, "I WILL NOT let thee go, except thou bless me." *Kitto.*

The effect was what might have been anticipated; whatever may have been the widow's doubts before, she could resist no longer. Surely the presence and power of a far greater God than any she had ever known were there. She recognized Him of whom she had often heard, the Lord God of Elijah; and, in the spirit of the Galilean nobleman whose son Jesus restored to life, she exclaimed to the prophet, "Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." *W. M.*—Doubtless, what her meal and oil had assured her of, the death of her son made her to doubt; and now, reviving, did reascertain. Even the strongest faith sometimes staggereth, and needeth new acts of heavenly supportation. The end of miracles is confirmation of truth. It seems had this widow's son continued dead her belief had been buried in his grave; notwithstanding her meal and her oil, her soul had languished. The mercy of God is fain to provide new helps for our infirmities, and graciously condescends to our own terms, that we may work out our faith and salvation. *Bp. H.*

The incident is valuable as exhibiting the clement of deep tenderness which there was in this stern prophet of the Restoration, and

which is so often found blended with great severity. It is the principal instance in which this obverse of Elijah's character is presented. Obedience, tender sympathy, terrible severity, heroic courage, deep despondency—what wonderful elements were blended into this magnificent character! *Allon.*

The chapter is specially fruitful in *distinctive suggestions.*

Elijah's whole story, in keeping with its beginning here, is a succession of marvels requiring a faith and courage as marvellous. The secret, alike of his boldness and fortitude, is told by James (5:17). He was only a man, but a man whose faith in God's promise was habitually exercised in the largest petitions. He literally obeyed the command, Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it. *B.*—Is it any wonder that Elijah was strong in the faith? He did as he was told. He found it as it was promised. And his faith grew in its exercise, as it always does. The flower in growing turns every atom of its nourishment into its own substance; bringing it forth again in its healthful growth, its fragrance and its beauty. So is it with faith in God. It must "*grow by what it feeds on.*" It must turn the teachings of the Word and the little incidents of daily life into the elements of its growth, its strength, its fragrance and its beauty. *W. Newton.*

God sends prophets and revelations; He disposes the events of Providence; He discloses the philosophy of history; He puts men under every sort of probation, that they may learn simply and steadfastly to confide in Him. Ahab and Jezebel, with the wealth of the world at their feet, made utter shipwreck of life for want of this faith alone. Elijah became an immortal hero because he possessed this one overwhelming power. Nor is the reason far to seek. Faith unites men to God, makes them will His will, and eventually opens to them all His infinite resources. All things belong to believers—all, because they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. *McPherson.*

A life of activity needs, as a preparation or as a counterpoise and restorative, its times of retirement and prayerful thought. So was it with Elijah and other ancient leaders of God's people. So was it even with Christ, for His comfort and support. The still hour of quiet thought and devout communion with our heavenly Father fills the soul with light, girds it with strength, and cheers it with hope and serene, glad trust.

In emergencies of duty and peril God adequately protects and delivers His servants.

Yet He requires their endeavors to concur with His plans, even in their deliverances. Elijah must seek and keep his hiding-place; and change it too, when God wills.

God provides for the obedient and trustful in all circumstances and under every vicissitude of experience. When He suffers the brook to fail, from other and ample resources He continues needful supplies. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you."

God's ordinary methods of provision, under the force of what we call *laws* of nature, are intrinsically far more wonderful than the peculiar and occasional method of miracle. In the daily production of meal and oil just sufficient for the household needs of the day, even though continued for two years, there was far less of exertion and of actual product than in the manifold complicated processes through which their supply had been wontedly provided. So that if the miraculous method reminded this little household, as it did the Israelites for forty years, of God's daily bounty, much more forcibly should His varied, wide-extended and vastly complicated natural processes recall His abundant goodness, impress the sense of our dependence, and prompt the assured expectation of full answer to our habitual petition, "Give us day by day our daily bread."

Trial and suffering, whether visited upon a nation or an individual, are mercifully designed to recall a forgotten God, to impress a sense of guilt, to awaken the desire and prompt the purpose of return to an unforgetting, loving Father. B.—If we were never afflicted on account of sin, we should soon cease to feel its evil nature. God has, therefore, connected misery with sin, and the children of God, when afflicted, are reminded of sin as the cause; while they are also led to search out their own sin in particular, and to inquire why their affliction came upon them. Thus the widow asked Elijah, "Why hast thou brought my sin to remembrance?" *R. Hall.*

Two unsurpassed illustrations are here recorded of the prevalent might of believing importunate prayer. It "turns the key of the clouds," first to close and afterward to open their treasures, and it brings back the dead to life.

It is instructive to note that Christ endorses the truth of this history. He refers to the shutting of the heavens for three years and six months, and the consequent famine. He also affirms that Elijah was "sent to a woman of Sarepta, that was a widow" (Luke 4 : 25, 26).

B.—The reference of our Lord to this history shows these three things: that the entertainment of Elijah was a distinguishing honor conferred on the widow of Sarepta, that it proved of real spiritual benefit to her, and that it implied that God had purposes of grace beyond the narrow bounds of Israel, unbelieving as it was—in the language of St. Paul, that He was not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (Rom. 3 : 29). May we not go a step farther and see in this mission of Elijah to and entertainment by a heathen widow an anticipation at least of the announcement of that "Kingdom of God," in its world-wide bearing, which formed part of the message of his antitype, John the Baptist? *A. E.*

The mission of God is wider than we think. Children of God are to be found scattered where, left to ourselves, we should hardly seek for them. There is a covenant beyond the covenant. There are those who are "of God," who are "of the truth," in scenes where we imagine that those only are to be met with who are the children of idolatry and falsehood. No one can rightly do the work of God, even in any limited sphere in which he may have been placed, until he has learned that there is something wider than that sphere, and that to the establishment of the wider, not the narrower, all the plans of God ultimately tend. We cannot worship truly in the temple built with hands unless we recognize the fact that there is a temple built without hands. We cannot really love our neighbor unless we own a neighbor in every child of Adam. And we cannot successfully serve the Israel of God unless we feel that those as yet beyond that Israel are also the objects of our heavenly Father's love, and that He would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The lesson thus impressed upon Elijah by his being sent to Zarephath was one of infinite importance, and it is a part of the great truth everywhere imbedded in the Old Testament, though not clearly seen in every age, that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was also the God of the whole earth, and that His salvation was from the beginning designed to be universal. *W. M.*

Admitting the historic occurrence of miracles, those recorded in the history of Elijah are in singular harmony with the general plan and purpose of miracles as the outward material sign and signal of prophetic character and mission; as also with the peculiar character of the crisis with which Elijah's mission was connect-

ed. The Old Testament history has naturally and necessarily its crises of miracle, as in the two great distinctive missions of Moses and Elijah. That these should be signalized by special miracle is only in harmony with the entire conception. All the miracles wrought by Elijah have a significant religious purpose. They are in harmony with their occasions, and they are incorporated in a history of remarkable simplicity, directness, and elevation. If the historic character of the miraculous be admitted at all, the miracles wrought by Elijah carry the presumption of singular congruity. *Allon.*

In the Bible even the supernatural—we may say it without a paradox—is most natural. It is in such true keeping with the times, with the events and doctrines it attests, with all the surrounding historical circumstances as they are narrated, that we almost lose the feeling of the supernatural in the admirable harmony and consistency of the ideas and scenes presented. It seems to be just what might have been ex-

pected; it would be strange that it should be otherwise; the marvellous here is the presumptive, the extraordinary becomes the easy of belief. The supernatural assumes the familiar appearance of the natural, and God's coming down to us and speaking to us seem less incredible than that far-off silence which, though so unbroken for our sense, is so perplexing and unaccountable to our reason. T. L.

In comparing the raisings of the dead on the part of the Saviour with those of the prophets on the one hand and those of the apostles on the other, there comes into view a remarkable distinction as well as a beautiful agreement. The Saviour's raisings of the dead are attended with an exalted composure and majesty, and an acting from His own completeness of might, before which there wholly vanishes that tension and strain of all the powers of the soul which we observe, more or less, in the prophets and apostles. What to us appears supernatural, for Him appears the highest nature. *Van O*

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## Section 10.

### ELIJAH AT CARMEL

1 KINGS 18 : 1-46.

1 AND it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the  
 2 third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. And  
 3 Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And the famine was sore in Samaria. And Ahab  
 4 called Obadiah, which was over the household. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly;  
 5 for it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred  
 5 prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) And Ahab  
 said unto Obadiah, Go through the land, unto all the fountains of water, and unto all the  
 brooks: peradventure we may find grass and save the horses and mules alive, that we lose  
 6 not all the beasts. So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab  
 7 went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. And as Obadiah  
 was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said,  
 8 Is it thou, my lord Elijah? And he answered him, It is I: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah  
 9 *is here.* And he said, Wherein have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into  
 10 the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom,  
 whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not here, he took  
 11 an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell  
 12 thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here.* And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee,  
 that the spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell  
 Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me; but I thy servant fear the LORD from my  
 13 youth. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD,  
 how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with  
 14 bread and water? And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah *is here:* and he  
 15 shall slay me. And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will

16 surely shew myself unto him to-day. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him : and  
 17 Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said  
 18 unto him, Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel ? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel ;  
 but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD,  
 19 and thou hast followed the Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto  
 mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the  
 20 Asherah four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of  
 21 Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came near unto  
 all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions ? if the LORD be God, follow  
 22 him : but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said  
 Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD ; but Baal's prophets  
 23 are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks ; and let them  
 choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no  
 24 fire under : and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under.  
 And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD : and the God  
 that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well  
 25 spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves,  
 and dress it first ; for ye are many ; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under.  
 26 And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the  
 name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no  
 27 voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped about the altar which was made. And it  
 came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud : for he is a god ; either he  
 is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must  
 28 be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and  
 29 lances, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it was so, when midday was past, that they  
 prophesied until the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation ; but there was neither voice,  
 30 nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near  
 unto me ; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD  
 31 that was thrown down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the  
 tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be  
 32 thy name. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD ; and he made a  
 33 trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the  
 34 wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood. And he said, Fill  
 four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt offering, and on the wood. And he said, Do  
 it the second time ; and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time ; and  
 35 they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar ; and he filled the trench  
 36 also with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation, that  
 Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O LORD, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel,  
 let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I  
 37 have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may  
 38 know that thou, LORD, art God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the  
 fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the  
 39 dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they  
 40 fell on their faces : and they said, The LORD, he is God ; the LORD, he is God. And Elijah  
 said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal ; let not one of them escape. And they took  
 41 them : and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. And  
 Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink ; for there is the sound of abundance of  
 42 rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel ;  
 43 and he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees. And he  
 said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said,  
 44 There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh  
 time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man's hand.  
 And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Make ready *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the  
 45 rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in a little while, that the heaven grew black with  
 46 clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the  
 hand of the LORD was on Elijah ; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the  
 entrance of Jezreel.

*Introductory.* The preparatory work of the famine had now been accomplished in the hearts of king and people. Ample proof had been afforded in their fearful experience. They had abundant reason now to know that Jehovah, the God of their fathers, incontestably and absolutely controlled the clouds of heaven and all the processes of nature. They might have inferred that to Him, and not to Baal, pertained all creative, sustaining and reproductive might; that He *made* the sun to shine, and that as and when He would He gathered the clouds and bade them dispense the rain. In the thought of the thoughtful among the people there must have been some realization of their grave offence against this living omnipotent God; an offence of which their protracted suffering was the consequence and the punishment. Ahab, too, beside the terrible experience in which he and his court had shared, in addition to these lessons that the people had learned, had been further prepared for coming events. His search for the prophet, even through all neighboring kingdoms, had been vain. He had been utterly foiled in his murderous purpose against Elijah. Meanwhile the prophet's word had been unvaryingly fulfilled season after season and year after year. It *must* now have impressed even his haughty heart that Jehovah had indeed spoken by Elijah, and that Jehovah had protected his brave, true servant. So the purposed preparative work of the famine was now complete. B.

History is a record of great epochs. An individual, a nation, or a church is estimated by what it is at its greatest. We judge Greece by the age of Pericles, Rome by the age of Augustus; they are not the common acts of a life, or the common lives of a nation, but their greatest acts and lives, which determine its place and power. The age of Elijah was such an epoch in the history of Israel; it was part of a manifold development of which itself was the crown. His personality is as distinct, as great, and as influential as that of any character in the history of Israel, Moses only excepted. His individuality is so marked and unique that while there is but little in common between him and Samuel and David, he claims equal rank with both, and there is no other to be named with them. The dramatic character and conditions of his appearance and work make him in some respects a more remarkable personage than either. By his individual prophetic power he arrested the idolatrous course and revolutionized the religious character of the entire nation. He found Ahab and Jezebel

bent upon the establishment of idolatry, and the theistic feeling of the people so utterly decayed that he thought it extinct. By his single word, lofty, uncompromising, and authoritative, he defeated the strenuous policy of the weak king and his able, subtle, and unscrupulous wife, and turned the entire tide of national feeling, recalling the people for the time to repentance, and to the renewed acknowledgment of Jehovah. The entire conception of the man, his grandeur of character, his heroic achievements, his dauntless fidelity, and the dramatic form and romantic coloring of his history, have no parallel in literature. We have only to recall the equally detailed histories of Samuel and Elisha to realize how much deeper and more vivid the impression which Elijah makes, how much more heroic and potent his prophetic force. *Allon.*

**1-4.** Three years and a half had elapsed since the sudden appearance and startling prediction of Elijah to Ahab. God's time had come to send rain upon the dry and barren soil of Israel. We have already learned (from James 5:17) what part Elijah's intercession had in the sending, as his prayer had in the withholding. But God will put honor on the prophet by making good his word in the presence of the king and people. Therefore the command, "Go, show thyself to Ahab." Always obedient, the prophet leaves his quiet home at Sarepta, and fearlessly goes to find the king. Readily and speedily is Ahab found through another of those divinely ordered coincidences of which the Bible history and every personal life is full. B.

**3. Over the household.** It is scarcely less strange to find Ahab employing Obadiah than to find Obadiah serving under Ahab. Whether he knew of Obadiah's faith may be uncertain, but we may be sure that he had proved his fidelity. It was because Obadiah was "faithful in all his house" that he was retained in this position. It was not to Ahab's interest to have a Baal-worshipper at the head of his retainers. Bad men do not care to be served by their kind. They pay piety and probity the compliment—such as it is—of encouraging it in their dependents and children.

**4. Only the power of God could keep men holy in Ahab's or Nero's palace.** Coleridge has somewhere said that there are two classes of Christian evidences—Christianity and Christendom; the system in itself, its pure morality, its beneficent teachings, and its results, its conquests, and achievements in the world. For it is altogether beyond the power of human nature to

work the moral changes which Christianity has wrought either to convert men or to preserve them from falling.

*If men could be saints in Ahab's and Nero's palace, they may be saints anywhere.* How constantly do men plead the adverse circumstances in which they are placed as a reason why they cannot serve God! Sometimes it is a godless street or wicked hamlet; sometimes it is an irreligious household or infidel workshop; or their trade is such, their employers or associates are such, that they cannot live a godly life. But the example of Obadiah, the example of those saints of the Prætorium, convicts them of untruth and of cowardice. They cannot have greater temptations or fiercer persecutions than befell those Roman Christians. If they proved steadfast and lived in sweetness and purity, which of us cannot do the same wherever we may be placed? *Hammond.*

Take history through and through, and it will be found that the men and women who have most devoutly and honestly feared God have done most to defend and save the countries in which they lived. They have made little noise, but their influence has silently penetrated the national life, and secured for the land the loving and mighty care of God. Where the spiritual life is profound and real, the social and political influence is correspondingly vital and beneficent. A hidden work is continually going on; the people in the shade are strengthening the social foundation. J. P.

**5, 6.** *The search for grass throughout the land by Ahab and Obadiah.* They had divided the land in an endeavor to "find grass to save" the remnant of the king's horses and mules. Obadiah was the chief steward in charge of the royal household, and, as his name purports, was a *servant of Jehovah*. Him only, it would seem, Ahab could trust to share with himself in making careful and thorough search for this greatly needed food. They had departed probably from Jezreel, where Ahab had built a palace, in which he spent much of his time.

**7-16.** *The meeting and interview of Elijah with Obadiah.* This must have occurred soon after the parting of Obadiah from Ahab, and not far from Jezreel. For on the same day Obadiah overtook Ahab, and the king returned to meet Elijah, who had awaited his coming. The meeting of the prophet with the steward was not an accident, but a prearranged providence. So is every minute conjunction of events through which the casual every-day meetings of men are brought about. This is the true idea and meaning of providence. It is

God's purpose carried out in all actual events. Obadiah at once recognized Elijah; partly perhaps by his strange mantle of skins, but more by the lofty demeanor of the prophet of God. With a reverence befitting a kingly presence, he salutes him with a kingly title. "Art thou here, my lord Elijah?" In his reply the prophet transfers the title to Ahab. "Tell him who is thy lord that Elijah awaits him here."

The main point of the steward's rejoinder (verses 9-14) is the fear lest Elijah might not remain there to be found of Ahab, and so the king's wrath would be turned against Obadiah, for failing to apprehend the prophet. For well he knew how intense was Ahab's desire to find Elijah. This he declares to the prophet. He tells him how Ahab has caused search for him to be made among the neighboring kingdoms of Tyre and Moab, and even in Judah. To bring Ahab there to be disappointed was to ensure his own destruction. Obadiah did not doubt Elijah's word, but simply thought that God might direct him to go elsewhere, so that Ahab would not find him. For this had been the case already, in his sudden appearance at and disappearance from the palace. But to assure Elijah that his hesitation in bearing the message to Ahab did not come from unwillingness to serve Jehovah or His prophet even at great personal risk, Obadiah affirms his life-long loyalty to the God of Israel. And he simply states how, at the hazard of his own life, he had rescued a hundred of the *Lord's prophets* from the murderous pursuit of the fierce, vindictive Jezebel.

The prophets here referred to were men whom God had raised up in considerable numbers from time to time, as successors of those originally trained in the schools of Samuel. They did not, like Samuel, prophesy or offer sacrifice, nor were they entrusted with special messages or errands from Jehovah. Their office was of a more private nature. They read and expounded the law and the ways of the Lord to individuals and families who retained their integrity and loyalty to Him. And it was *through their fidelity to this trust* that even in these times of universal and aggravated wickedness there remained yet in Israel *seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal*. These faithful ministers Jezebel sought to destroy, and many of them she had slaughtered. A hundred of them, Obadiah, who knew them well and had been taught by them, had saved from the slaughter. Obadiah's present fear, though standing out in such marked contrast with Eli-

jah's fearlessness, argues nothing against the reality of his faith. The crisis of peril was so great that, like Peter in the high priest's hall, his courage was for the time overcome by it. He needed only the assurance, which Elijah gave him at once, confirming it with an oath, to convince him that the prophet's direction was the Lord's will. And instantly, without another word, he went to overtake Ahab, and bear the message of Elijah. "And Ahab went to meet Elijah."

The form of oath (verse 15) used by Elijah, *As the Lord of Hosts liveth*, frequently repeated in the subsequent Old Testament history, enfolds truths of exceeding sublimity and comfort. Transcendently incomparable with the armies of earth, the Hosts of heaven are ever in array before their King, and ever ready for the protection or deliverance of those who represent Him and His cause among men. This was the thought that inspired and sustained the soul of Elijah, the thought that may well inspire and sustain the heart of every true and faithful servitor of the Lord of the heavenly Hosts. *As He liveth*, said the devoted prophet, expressing an assurance that needed no evidence, that admitted no question. To our hearts, cherishing the same comforting assurance, comes in later times that more cheering and satisfying utterance of Jehovah Jesus, *Because I live, ye shall live also!* The further phrase, "before whom I stand," repeated in verse 15, well expresses the prophet's habitual attitude of soul. Ever consciously in Jehovah's presence, ever mindful of that presence, ever desiring and seeking to know His will, and ever ready and glad to execute that will, this was Elijah's habit of mind and heart. And this is the true abiding state of every faithful believer and trustful follower of the sustaining, faithful Jehovah Jesus, our God and Saviour. B.

10. Whatever may have been the case with the people, there is every reason to believe that no salutary result had been produced in the mind of the king. None knew so well as he why the suffering had been sent; but he closed his heart against conviction, and with the vain folly of persecutors in every age, he sought to wreak his vengeance upon those who had warned him of approaching punishment instead of repenting of the sin by which the punishment had been provoked. He made every effort to discover the hiding-place of Elijah. W. M.

12. One sentence which Ahab's chamberlain uttered to Elijah helps us in a measure to un-

derstand Obadiah's constancy to the ancient religion of Israel, "I, thy servant, fear the Lord from my youth." Ahab and his fellow-idolaters had much to contend against ere Obadiah could be perverted. The earliest impressions are commonly the most lasting. Principles firmly rooted in childhood or early youth will be torn up by no ordinary tempest, and may even withstand the violence of an extraordinary storm. M. J.

15. The distinctive inspiration of Elijah was religious conviction and sentiment, and not mere patriotism. Against all the organized powers and social forces of his age he stands in the simple might of his religious convictions. Through all history no inspiration has been so mighty. The impelling and sustaining force of patriotism, of natural affection even, gives place to that of religion. The sense of Divine supremacy, the depth and sanctity of religious feeling, and the strength of religious conviction, together with the consciousness of a Divine commission, and the involuntary reverence inspired by it, have over and over again made weak and solitary men revolutionary powers in society. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Peter, Paul, are among the instances in sacred story; Athanasius, Ambrose, Mahomet, Huss, Wycliffe, Savonarola, Luther, "the solitary monk that shook the world," Calvin, John Knox, are among those of later religious history. Among them Elijah, although not the first, is perhaps the supreme instance. No man ever fought the battle of God against greater odds or under more arduous conditions, or achieved a more signal and momentous victory. No inspiration that human experience knows is so noble and strong and irresistible as religious inspiration, and the purer the religious faith the greater is its power.

16. It is to be noted that it is Elijah who summons Ahab to the interview which follows; and that under the pressure of terrible necessity, as well as of the awe which the prophetic and religious character of Elijah produced upon him, and urged by Obadiah, he at once complies. Elijah's lofty message is, "Behold, Elijah is here." "And Ahab went to meet Elijah." *Allon.*

17, 18. *The meeting of the false-hearted king and the true-hearted prophet.* It was a meeting of two strong-willed spirits, the one hardened by his own multiplied iniquities, the other girded by the might of truth and of unserving devotion to the will of Jehovah. Yet the guilty king dares to assume the side of right in charging evil upon God's prophet. *Is it thou,*



*he asks, thou troubler of Israel?* His question shows an utterly unhumble heart, a persistent strength of rebellious will that indicates great natural force of character. Ahab was not the pliant man, the wife-ruled monarch, so often mistakenly represented. The tremendous charge involved in his bold question to the prophet was the natural utterance of a stern, haughty, thoroughly self-willed man. But Elijah's answer reveals a nature of even sterner structure—a will of even greater strength, re-enforced by a Divine power and sustained by a conscious Divine inspiration. Sharply, without any form of deference, in the name of Jehovah he hurls back the infamous charge upon the conscience of the *man*. As with the voice and authority of God, the King of kings, he denounces this royal blasphemer as the Achan, the real troubler of God's people, Israel. *Thou and thy father's house* have brought these terrible calamities upon the nation! And as distinctly he denounces the stupendous sin of sins, because of which these fearful judgments had been wrought. *Ye have forsaken the Commandments of the Lord, and THOU* (concentrating the whole crime upon Ahab himself) *hast followed Baalim!* As Samuel with Saul, Nathan with David, John with Herod, and Paul with Felix, so Elijah deals personally with the man, the royal sinner, Ahab. *Thou* hast overthrown the altars and worship of the Lord thy God, the God of Israel! *Thou* hast defiled the heart of thy people by bringing in the abominations and corruptions of Baal-worship! Conscious guilt seals the monarch's lips. No word of reply does he utter then or afterward. Admitting the truth of Elijah's burning words, and knowing that all hope of help for himself and his people must come through this prophet of Jehovah, he silently listens to the command that follows. And without word of demur, he proceeds to obey it. B.

**18.** Yes, *here* was the arch-sinner and true troubler of Israel, and not he who was the mere voice of the Divine rebuke and judgment. Elijah denounced the sin, but Ahab committed it; Elijah announced the coming drought, but Ahab provoked the scourge; Elijah pronounced the Divine curse, but Ahab's crimes deserved and compelled it. There are many who falsely conceive the source of trouble, and many more who falsely represent it. *Pierson.*

**19-20.** For sublime heroism of trust and deed, nothing in human history can match this prophet of God in this ever-memorable scene. Among the grander triumphs of faith recounted in the psalm of Heb. 11 none can surpass the

story of this intense, unfaltering, mighty spirit. Few can equal his entireness of consecration to Jehovah, and his complete devotion to his strange, great mission. Remember the burdening conviction resting on his heart, that he alone was left of all the Lord's ministers; and that there were none of all the people who would avow themselves on the Lord's side. Jealous, he was, for the Lord of Hosts; yet grieving over the guilt and peril of Israel. Thus alone and thus burdened, he yet quietly confronts an angry king, a hating priesthood, and an unfriendly people. Panoplied only with truth and fealty to God, he stands before the vast host with a calmness, a dignity, and an undaunted courage that evinced true royalty of soul, and the most absolute, sublime trust in Jehovah. And he stands *avowedly for God*. Jehovah's controversy with His people, in mercy prolonged from age to age, Elijah conducts in this eventful issue as the divinely appointed advocate and champion.

**19, 20.** *Israel convened at Carmel by Ahab, at Elijah's direction.* Mount Carmel is a high ridge, running sixteen miles southeast from the sea, with an elevation of six hundred to seven-hundred feet. It forms the principal western boundary of the great plain of Esdraelon. About four miles from the eastern extremity near its highest summit, and not far from the river Kishon flowing along its base, was the place of gathering. The conformation of the ground was suited to the purpose, and had been used for worship by the adjacent tribes before the Temple had been erected. The foundation of an altar to Jehovah still remained. The place, if not central, was convenient and easy of access to the people of the ten tribes. For all lines of travel east and west of the Jordan converged upon the great thoroughfare traversing the plain.

As one having authority from the King of kings, proven to be God's vicegerent by the accomplishment of his previous prediction of long drought to Ahab, Elijah explicitly commands Ahab to gather all Israel with the idolatrous prophets to a meeting with *him*. And the strong heart of the angry king, being in God's hands and turned as He would, quailed before the might of truth and of God manifest in the prophet. As if Elijah were the sovereign and he the subject, Ahab obeys the command. He was so far convinced that Elijah was a Divine messenger, and so desirous that the interdict might be removed, that both fear and hope constrained his unquestioning obedience.

So a vast multitude from all the land were

gathered together with Ahab and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. But not the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who were supported by Jezebel, as the priests of her own palace-worship. The Asherah refers to a pillar-shaped image upon which was concentrated the worship of Ashtaroth, the female deity, as Baal was the male. Intense abhorrence is attached in the Bible to the meaning and the rites of this most abominable worship. Jezebel suffered not these to go with Ahab; nor did she go herself. B.—Jezebel had introduced the female as well as the male divinity, so that nothing might be wanting to the complete observance of the worship to which she had been trained at home. The staff of priests, eight hundred and fifty for the two divinities, shows what an outlay was made for the perfection of the idolatrous rites. *Lumby.*

20. The range of Carmel is about sixteen miles long, stretching back from the Mediterranean Sea in a southeast direction. The range rises as it recedes into the interior, being only some five or six hundred feet high at the lighthouse and convent on its western extremity, and perhaps seventeen hundred feet high near its eastern extremity, where it commands a view of the sea on the one side and the plain of Esdraelon on the other. A little to the east of the loftiest point of the ridge, high on the declivity looking toward Esdraelon and commanding the view of Jezreel, seems to have been the exact place of the contest. At the Kishon, which here flows by the mountain's base, Elijah slew the discomfited prophets of Baal, and then, from the place of the contest, near the mountain's summit, he prayed for rain—his servant climbing, in the intervals of prayer, to the outlook above, from which the prospect opened on the sea. N. C. B.

On the promontory running into the sea stands the convent from which the celebrated order of Carmelites sprung, but the point of chief interest is the shapeless ruin at the eastern end of the ridge called by the Arabs "El Maharrakah" (the sacrifice), where in all probability stood "the altar of the Lord that was broken down," and which was repaired by Elijah on the occasion of his memorable conflict with the priests of Baal. Not far distant is a well which may have furnished water for the trenches round the altar, and in the plains below winds the Kishon, to which Elijah "brought down" the false prophets "and slew them there." *Wilson.*

*Carmel*, one of the historical mountains of Palestine, is also one of its most striking natu-

ral features. Not a peak, like Hermon, nor a rounded hill, as Tabor: Carmel is a long ridge branching off from the mountains of Samaria, and running for sixteen miles southeast and northwest, forming a bold headland, the one indentation of the long straight coast-line of Palestine. It forms by its projection the Bay of Acre to the north, and runs out with a bold bluff, almost as precipitous as its eastern end, into the sea itself, leaving but a narrow strip of sand at its base. It thus stands as a wall between the maritime plain of Sharon on the south, and the more inland plain of Esdraelon on the north. It is nearly eighteen hundred feet high, but gently descends toward the western front of the bluff, which is not more than six hundred feet in height, while the eastern end is sixteen hundred feet above the sea. To the summit, at the very edge of the cliff, must have come Elijah's servant, while his master prayed on the terrace a hundred feet or more below, and sometimes returned to gaze, till over the distant Cyprus the little cloud at length arose portending the coming rain, exactly as it does now. From this spot a slippery path descends three hundred feet lower down to the Mohrakah, the "burning" or "the sacrifice." There is no village, no house, only a shapeless ruin; yet here the spot has a name, and the recollection of the miracle is imbedded in the Arabic nomenclature. It is a glade overlooking the plain, somewhat in the shape of an amphitheatre, and completely shut in on the north by the well-wooded cliffs. No place can be conceived more adapted by nature to be that wondrous battle-field of truth, where Elijah appealed to Israel, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" In front of the principal actors in the scene, with the king and his courtiers by their side, the thousands of Israel might have been gathered on the lower slopes, witnesses of the whole struggle to its stupendous result.

The whole view from the summit of Carmel burst grandly upon us in a moment. We were standing on the edge of a cliff, from the base of which the mountain sank steeply down one thousand feet into the plain of Esdraelon, the battle-field of Israel. We looked down on a map of Central Palestine. The hewn stones among which we stood mark the site of the altar of the Lord which Jezebel overthrew and Elijah repaired. To this spot came Elijah's servant to look for the little cloud, which at length rose to the prophet's prayer, and portended the coming rain exactly as it does now. No site in Palestine is more indisputable than

that of the little hollow in the knoll below us, where the Lord God of Elijah manifested His Divinity before Ahab and assembled Israel. The plain beneath us, though slightly inclining westward, appeared a dead flat, bounded on the north by the hills of Galilee, generally bare and woodless, and on the south by those of Samaria; with Mount Tabor rising proudly behind in the east and seeming almost to span the distance across from Galilee to Gilboa. We were overlooking the sites of the old cities of Jezreel, Megiddo, Shunem, Nain, and many others. Immediately below, on the banks of the Kishon, was a small flat-topped green knoll, "the mound of the priests," marking in its name the spot where Elijah slew the prophets of Baal, when he had brought them down to the "brook Kishon." For twenty miles the eye could follow the vast expanse. Behind us, on the one side of Carmel, stretched the sea, whence rose the little cloud like a man's hand; and a long strip of Sharon; on the other side we had a peep of the plain of Acre and the sea washing its edge. *Tristram.*

**21.** *Elijah's earnest expostulation with the people.* Before he utters the prayer which will bring back the long withheld blessing to the people, their minds and hearts must be wrought upon to induce a sense of guilt and feeling of repentance. They must be turned back to God, before He will turn with restored favors to them. And this expostulation is the first means to stir their sluggish souls. Plain and conclusive is this sharp question and charge. Directly it applied to their religious condition and practice. They really believed in no God, neither in Jehovah nor Baal. They *would* not believe in the one, and *could* not (against the many strong counter influences of their history) believe in the other. They were therefore utterly unsettled in their actual worship; to make sure, attempting to mix the worship of God with that of Baal. Conscience constrained them to formally *recognize* the true God, while their natural selfish lusts seduced them into the vile practices of Baal's temple and ritual. Assuming their guilt, Elijah breaks forth abruptly with the rebuking question, How long will ye hesitate and practice this indecision? Assuming, too, that there can be but one supreme sovereign Deity, he sharply presses the conclusive charge to *follow Him who is the God.* Not himself asserting, but urging them to determine for themselves *which is the true God.* But they are silent; and their silence is a confession of the truth of the rebuke. It also intimates their ignorance and inability to decide between Je-

hovah and Baal. Therefore it is that Elijah proposes a method of decision, which, while appealing to their judgments, was suited to their ignorance and deadness of heart. B.—His words have the ring of authority as he rebukes indecision, and calls for a clear adhesion to Baal or Jehovah. If the people had answered, the trial by fire would have been needless. But their silence shows that they waver, and therefore he makes his proposal to them. Note that the priests are not consulted, nor is Ahab. The former would have had some excuse for shirking the sharp issue; but the people's assent forced them to accept the ordeal, reluctantly enough, no doubt. A. M.

Elijah was habitually a man of the fewest words; but these few words were always full of power, and produced effect. He spoke from God, he spoke from his own heart to the hearts of others. His words here were not aimed at the apostasy, but at the hesitancy of the people—not at their idolatry, but at their indecision. Under the old dispensation, as under the new, nothing is more abhorrent to God than a profane neutrality in matters of vital moment—than the lukewarmness which admits not of decided opinions. He likes decision. He likes something real. Be hot; be cold; be something. Instead of a tirade against Baal and his worshippers, here is a simple alternative of choice. His simple cry is—"Decide!" *Kitto.*

"*If the Lord be God, follow Him; if Baal, then follow him.*" If this world be the only good, the fit and proper object of your affections, if this world can satisfy your immortal desires, if it can support under trials, give you peace of conscience, if it can cheer you in death and bless you through eternity, then fix your heart upon it, pursue it as your chief good, resolutely and to the end; cast off the fear of God, silence the voice of conscience, and make the most of this object of your choice. But if the Lord be God—if He is the eternal, self-existent, glorious being whose claims upon your heart no tongue can describe, if He is the only object that can fill the soul, if you are immortal, if there is a judgment to come on whose throne He will sit, if there is a heaven which His mercy hath prepared, if there is a hell kindled by His justice, if there is a God, follow Him. *N. W. Taylor.*

**22-24.** *The question of Divine power to be submitted to actual test of miracle.* Elijah appeals to the ordeal of sacrifice because it was a rite common to all religions, and divinely instituted at first as the great symbol of expiation.

Other nations had kept its form and something of the religious awe attached to the rite, although its true meaning had been almost universally lost. *T. Lewis*.—In presenting our sacrifice, Elijah said to the people, Let us who here represent Jehovah and Baal, I alone and these four hundred and fifty, try the question of power by actual appeal to these respective deities! "And the God that answereth by fire, let him be God!" In former days of their history the true God had thus testified His acceptance of the sacrifices of Moses and Gideon, of David and Solomon. And on behalf of Baal, it was claimed that he, being the Sun-god, had sovereign control over all natural elements and forces. If the claim was a just one, it would be an easy thing for him to send down fire to consume the sacrifice. No other form of appeal was adequate to the case. The people were in no condition to understand or to heed the teachings of the past; either the statutes or the wonderful acts of God as revealed through Moses, Joshua, or Samuel. He therefore puts the issue of authority upon the present power of God. He rests God's right in demanding their obedience upon the only ground they can comprehend, the only proof they will heed, the open miraculous exhibition of a Divine might. Instantly and loudly the people recognize the fitness and approve the fairness of Elijah's proposition. Ahab is, at least, silenced. And the priests of Baal dare interpose no hindrance to the trial to which they are now to be challenged. B.

The act of sacrifice was Elijah's chosen test, as affording occasion for the most demonstrative result. The consuming of the flooded victim by fire from heaven was a miracle that could not be mistaken; and inasmuch as Baal was the sun or fire-god, the test was obviously congruous and conclusive. All that depended upon preference was somewhat scornfully conceded by Elijah. The scene described is one of the most dramatic and magnificent representations of lofty defiance, withering sarcasm, and tragic result, to be found in literature. Baal resisted not merely the entreaties but the blood-invoking power of his own priests; and as their raving was intensified into mania, the scoffing provocation of Elijah was increased, until the excitement of the entire scene becomes altogether unimaginable. The calm, sublime simplicity of the offering of Elijah which followed must have been in the highest degree impressive. *Allon*.

On the one side were arrayed Ahab, Baal, and Israel; on the other stood Jehovah. It

was a question of reality and of power; and Elijah was to be, so to speak, the embodiment of the Divine Power, the Minister of the Living and True God. We might almost say, that in his prophetic capacity Elijah was an impersonal being—the mere medium of the Divine. Throughout his history other prophets also were employed on various occasions: he only to do what none other had ever done or could do. His path was alone, such as none other had trodden nor could tread. He was the impersonation of the Old Testament in one of its aspects, that of grandeur and judgment—the living realization of the topmost height of the mount, which burned with fire, around which lightnings played and thunder rolled, and from out of whose terrible glory spake the voice of Jehovah, the God of Israel. A grander figure never stood out even against the Old Testament sky than that of Elijah. As Israel's apostasy had reached its highest point in the time of Ahab, so the Old Testament antagonism to it in the person and mission of Elijah. The analogy and parallelism between his history and that of Moses, even to minute details, is obvious on comparison of the two; and accordingly we find him, significantly, along with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration. A. E.

**23.** The Baal prophets are given every advantage in priority of action. Error is best unmasked by being allowed free opportunity to do its best; for the more favorable the circumstances of trial, the more signal the defeat. God's servants must never be suspected of unfair tricks in their controversy with error. They can afford to let it try first. Notice the substitution of "your god," in the Revised Version, for "your gods" in the Authorized Version. That is obviously right; for the only question was about one god—namely, Baal. A. M.

**24. He that answereth by fire, let him be God.** It is no random choice of a test; but precisely the test to recall to these apostate Israelites the glorious truths of the past. "The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." It was the ancient sign of Jehovah's presence to accept the true worship of His saints. So had He accepted Abel's sacrifice, so had He appeared to Abraham in his offering. So had He shot forth the fire from His throne on the Ark of the Covenant, to consume the first sacrifice at the dedication of the tabernacle, and again at the dedication of the Temple. While, therefore, the prophet seeks a sign, he will have a sign which shall hold forth the truth of God to the minds of the people. The impu-



ment of converting them from their apostasy. S. R.

Israel cannot but approve it; the prophets of Baal cannot refuse it; they had the appearance of the advantage in their number, in the favor of king and people. That God commanded Elijah this trial, who meant confusion to the authors of idolatry, victory to the truth. His terror shall be approved both by fire and by water; first by fire, then by water. There was no less terror in the fire than mercy in the rain. It was fit they should first be humbled by His terrors, that they might be made capable of His mercy; and by both might be won to repentance. Thus still, the fears of the law make way for the influences of grace; neither do those sweet and heavenly dews descend upon the soul, till way be made for them by the terrible flashes of the law. *Bp. II.*

**25-29.** *Trial of the issue on the part of the prophets of Baal.* As the challenging party, Elijah gives them all possible advantage. He assigns them the honor of precedency, allows them full time for their utmost efforts, and accepts the greater peril for himself in the event of their success. He simply insists that they adhere to the terms of the trial; that they appeal to their gods, and attempt no deceit by kindling their own sacrifice. Thus compelled to honest dealing, the prophets of Baal prepare their bullock for sacrifice, lay it upon the wood, and call upon the name of Baal. From morning until noon they reiterate their senseless cry—a prayer without any *plea* for its basis. And the result is strikingly stated in the narrative: *No voice, nor any that answered!* There was none to hear or answer. They addressed no *being*, and there could be no answer. The noon arrived. Patiently, yet with holy indignation, Elijah had borne with their repetitious blasphemy through the long morning hours. Now when the sun was hottest and their hope the strongest, with righteous irony he mocks at their vain appeal. "Perhaps your god has pleasant company, or is engaged in the chase, or journeying at a distance, or he is sleeping. Cry more loudly, if possibly he may hear and answer." But he speaks thus in no unseemly spirit of boasting or triumph at their discomfiture. He does not seek to anger these men, but to incite them to the utmost exertion so that their failure may be the more complete. His purpose is to impress the people with the absurdity as well as wickedness of such worship. He seeks to expose the deceits and break down the power of this false priesthood by his scornful derision, and by his own open brav-

ing of their assumed divinity. For these were the men by whom the people were misled, and this the god the people worshipped. Exasperated by his sarcasm into frenzy, they shout the more vehemently. After their custom, in keeping with those of all idolatrous heathen worship in every age and country, under the strange notion of propitiating the divine favor by extreme self-torture, they wound and disfigure their bodies until the blood gushed out upon them. Thus unwittingly they deepened the impression of Elijah's deriding words. And thus unavailingly they protracted the trial for nearly three hours longer. But, the narrative repeats, "there was neither voice, nor any answer, nor any that regarded!" The being and power of Baal had been openly tested, and the people saw both utterly disproved by the appeal. B.

**28.** What a scene to call worship! That is what millions of men are ready to practise to-day. And all the while there is no voice, no answer, no care for them, in the pitiless sky. The very genius of idolatry is set before us in that tumultuous crowd on Carmel. A. M.

**29.** The scene of Elijah quietly waiting, and in perfect confidence looking forward to the ultimate display of Jehovah's power, should be one to stimulate the confidence of the disciple of the nineteenth century. We are not without our false prophets to-day. True, they do not bow down to Baal; but they do reverence Nature as the grandest divinity in existence. Or, they enthrone humanity, whatever that may mean. They cry aloud in reviews and magazine articles, and expect the regeneration of man through their false religions. They are never done announcing the decay and downfall of the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob. The world and the Church have watched for years for the descent of fire upon the unbelievers' altars. But there is no fire there. Meantime, some godly man or woman, working away in the Seven Dials, or the Five Points, or the North End, finds the fire of God descending in answer to his prayer, and sees the flame of Christian love springing up in human hearts and the warmth of Christian zeal awakened where before it was absolutely dead. Can there, then, be any doubt as to which call upon the true God? *Schauffler.*

**30-35.** The natural features of the mount exactly correspond with the details of this narrative. The conspicuous summit, 1635 feet above the sea, on which the altars were placed, presents an esplanade spacious enough for the king and the priests of Baal to stand on the one

side, and Elijah on the other. It is a rocky soil, on which there is abundance of loose stones, to furnish the twelve stones of which the altar was built—a bed of thick earth in which a trench could be dug; and yet the earth not so loose that the water poured into it would be absorbed. Two hundred and fifty feet beneath the altar-plateau there is a perennial fountain, which, being close to the altar of the Lord, might not have been accessible to the people, and whence, therefore, even in that season of severe drought, Elijah could procure those copious supplies of water which he poured over the altar. The distance between this spring and the site of the altar is so short as to make it perfectly possible to go thrice thither and back again. *Van De Velde.*

The prophets of Baal were utterly discomfited. Six hours had they vainly spent in senseless supplication. Now the long-appointed time of the evening sacrifice (three o'clock) drew nigh, and Elijah proceeds to prepare the altar and sacrifice. Standing amid the ruins of the ancient altar to Jehovah, he bids the people come nearer, that the truth and depth of their impression may be increased. With twelve stones he rebuilds the altar. By this number he symbolizes the twelve tribes, whom as God's elect and favored people, he thus recognizes as still one, though now for years divided. By this act he boldly reaffirms the unity of the nation as originally established in fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham and Jacob. As boldly does he protest against the separate existence of the ten tribes, and their assumption of the name of Israel. Around the altar a broad trench is excavated. The wood he lays in order, and the prepared sacrifice he places upon the wood. Then at his command water is brought and poured upon the sacrifice, the wood, and stones of the altar, and the trench is filled to the brim. This he did that the miracle might be made the more convincing. With no excitement in act or word, but calmly and with dignity, his preparation is speedily made.

**36, 37.** *The prayer of Elijah at the hour of the evening sacrifice.* His supplication is simple, appropriate, intelligent, and quietly fervent. He utters no loud cry nor vain reiteration. He addresses a personal Being, who has sustained personal covenant relations with Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, the acknowledged progenitors of the nation. He thus reminds them that Jehovah is still the God of Israel. He asks something definite. "Let it be known that *Thou art God!*" This was the point in trial. "And that I am Thy servant, and have

done these things at Thy word!" This, too, was involved in the pending issue. And he pleads with God for hearing and answer. His plea is "that *this people may know* that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." He asks that God would reveal Himself by this miracle: first, that His own glory might be manifest; next, that Elijah's acts might be seen to come from His inspiration; and last, that the people might be convinced of the present power and the rightful claim of God, and so their hearts be drawn back to Him. A mediator and intercessor, pleading in the interest of this guilty people, he here joins together the *two always inseparable things, God's glory and the people's welfare.* B.

**36. At the time of the offering of the evening oblation.** This moment was selected for Elijah's sacrifice, in order to testify his loyalty to the Mosaic law, and to the Temple of God at Jerusalem. At the very time when the daily sacrifice was presented there, his offering on Carmel was made. **Elijah the prophet came near:** This was the technical phrase in the law for the priest's coming to the altar to offer a sacrifice (Ex. 28:43; 30:20; Lev. 21:21, 23). Elijah was not of the seed of Aaron, and was not therefore a priest. But the Levitical priests had been deposed by Jeroboam, and illegitimate priests had been substituted in their stead for the maintenance of his idolatrous worship. In the absence of a lawful priesthood, Elijah, as the immediate representative of the Most High, and acting under His direction and by His authority, offered this sacrifice. W. H. G.

**At Thy word.** Clearly we must suppose that in all the ordering of this sublime trial by fire, Elijah had been acting "at Thy word," even though we have no other record of the fact. Therefore he could ask God to vindicate his action and to prove that he was God's servant. His last petition is beautiful, both in its consciousness of power with God and recognition of his place as a prophet, and in its lowly subordination of all personal aims to the restoration of Israel to the true worship. He asks, with reiteration which is earnestness and faith, and therefore the sharpest contrast to the mechanical repetition by Baal's priests, that God would hear him; but his sole object in that prayer is that the blinded eyes may be opened, and the hearts that have been so sadly led astray be brought back to the worship of their fathers' God. The whole brief prayer, in its calm confidence, its adoring recognition of the

name and past dealings of Jehovah as the ground of trust, its throbbing of earnest desire for the manifestation of his character before men, its consciousness of personal relation to God, which humbles rather than puffs up, its beseeching for an answer, and its closing petition which comes round again to its first, that men may know God and fasten their hearts on Him, may well stand as a pattern of prayer for us. The short prayer of faith does in a moment what all the long day of crying could not do. A. M.

**38.** *The answer by fire.* Sublimely simple are the words of the sacred record. Instantly, while yet the heavens were without a cloud and while no conditions of lightning existed, the fire fell in the sight of the people. Different from all previous similar miracles was the effect of this descending fire. At the dedication of the Temple and at other times, only the sacrifice and the wood had been consumed. Here was superadded the turning of the altar stones, and even the intermixed earth itself, to ashes, and the instant exhalation of the water in the trench. Altar and sacrifice had disappeared, and their place left bare. Other altars, of Moses and David and Solomon, were consecrated by fire, but preserved for use, and in token of God's mercy. This one was utterly destroyed, because no more to be used, and as a symbol to the witnessing people of God's devouring wrath. B.

The whole assembly were clearly to understand what Being it was on whom he called for the demonstrative sign, which had irradiated the cloud before the camp of Israel. The fire, if it came, was to second that which had flamed on Sinai, and which had descended on Sodom. It was to be a fire of intelligence as well as power. It was to be Elijah's prayer converted and returned in flame. The prophet's prayer was that the very TRUTH might lighten on the scene, and consume all question, doubt, and subterfuge. The Invisible Presence was there; the thunderbolt was ready; and as soon as he had ended, "it fell." And neither sacrifice, nor altar, nor water, remained! The whole materials of the testimony were consumed. *J. Foster.*

**39.** *The instant unanimous verdict of the assembled and convicted people.* Without word or question or appeal from Elijah, constrained by an intense and overwhelming conviction to recognize a Divine and supernatural force in the consuming fire, the people bowed themselves to the earth, and cried, *Jehovah, He is the God!* Convinced, terrified, and for the time

humbled by the fearful demonstration, they were; but not converted. B.—The people were—for the time, at all events—swept away by the miracle, and by the force of the prophet's example and authority. Short-lived their faith may have been, as certainly it was superficial. The faith that is founded on miracle may be deepened into something better; but unless it is, it speedily dies away. The faith that is due to the influence of some strong personality may lead on to an independent faith, based on personal experience; but, unless it does, it too will perish. We may find a modern reproduction of the test of Carmel in the impotence of all other schemes and methods of social and spiritual reformation and the power of the Gospel. In it and its effects God answers by fire. Let the opposers, who are so glib in demonstrating the failure of Christianity, do the same with their enchantments, if they can. A. M.

If the miracle of the answer by fire be denied, there is absolutely nothing to account for the extraordinary and undeniable effect produced by the day on Carmel. Clearly the people believed in its occurrence, as clearly deception was impossible. The whole national movement demands its recognition. Either it really occurred as the history narrates it, or in some inconceivable way Elijah achieved a supreme imposture, which is a psychological as well as a physical impossibility. *Allon.*

**40.** *The execution of Baal's prophets.* "I have done this thing at Thy word," the Lord's prophet might have said again. By direction of Elijah, whose Divine commission had been so manifestly vindicated, the prophets of Baal were seized by the multitude and borne down to the gorge of the Kishon at the mountain's base. There, as Phinehas and Samuel before him, Elijah participated in and directed this Divinely ordered slaying. It was Jehovah's sentence that he was commissioned to enact. Before they were permitted to behold the goodness of Jehovah, Ahab and the people were to be taught the needed lesson of His severity. The punishment of the false prophets must precede mercy to the misled suffering people. Never was doom more richly merited. For these men were Israelites, intelligent perverters of the law, teachers and exemplars of all that was corrupting and destructive to the people. Furthermore, they were knowing usurpers of an office that Jehovah had expressly instituted, which only His true worshippers could fill. They were no prophets, as Baal was no god; their worship was defilement. Conscious and wilful impostors, they knowingly blasphemed

and defied the God of Israel. They virtually challenged Jehovah to a defence and deliverance of the people they had sought to make vile and to pollute. Was there not cause for use of "the sword of the Lord" in a crisis so supreme as this, when these shameless apostates sought to keep the people away from their God? Not only are they punished according to the express law of God (De. 13 : 1-11), but their punishment vividly suggests to the people their own desert of similar death. It sharply impresses God's warning against idolatry in the only way that they will heed. Even Ahab, who has followed and witnessed the execution of the idolatrous prophets, seems to share in the conviction and fear of the people. For he interposes no hindrance to Elijah's slaying sword. B.

**40. Take the prophets of Baal.** Elijah, as an extraordinary minister of God's vengeance upon sinners, executed the sentence of death passed upon the false prophets by the Lord of life and death, as perverters of the law and teachers of idolatry, as authors of cruelty and inciters of Jezebel to murder *the prophets of the Lord*, and as cheats and impostors, to whose execution the people concurred, their princes gave their consent, and their king (as astonished at the late stupendous miracle) could make no opposition. *Stackhouse*.—Elijah's action needs no apologies. As the Lord's prophet, as the vindicator and restorer of the law, there was no other course open to him. If the Mosaic law was then written, and this very incident is one of the proofs that it *was* then written; if it was still binding upon Israel; and if Elijah was justified in executing its provisions, and was required to execute them, however repugnant they might be to his inclinations, then he could not have done otherwise than he did. For it was an essential part of that law, it was an obligation that was laid, not once or twice, but on three separate occasions (Ex. 22 : 20; De. 13; 17 : 2-7), on the Jewish people, it was a duty they were to perform, however distressing and harrowing it might be (De. 13 : 6-9), to provide that the worshipper of false gods, and especially the teacher of such worship, should be put to death. The execution of this law could not be expected from the king. It must be executed, if at all, in spite of him, and in disregard of his protests. Only Elijah, therefore, could put it into force, and Elijah only in the hour of his triumph. And he held a commission, higher than the king's, as the prophet of the Most High. He had just proved that the Lord He was God. It was now

for him to prove that God's law was no dead letter. It was for him to cut off the men who had corrupted his countrymen, and threatened the very existence of the true religion. It is necessary, therefore, for those who challenge his conduct in this respect, who call him sanguinary and vindictive, to settle their account with the law which he obeyed, and, indeed, with Him who has approved this deed, and has forewarned us that He too will act in like manner (Luke 19 : 27). For this terrible retribution is by no means an exceptional or isolated act, in contrast to the general spirit of that dispensation; on the contrary, it is in thorough accord with the system out of which it sprung. For clearly it was allowed and approved of God, who otherwise would hardly have answered the prayer which Elijah presently offered, and other similar acts have distinctly received Divine commendation (Ex. 32 : 25-28; Num. 25 : 7-18; 2 K. 1 : 9). *Hammond*.

**41-44.** *With a final direction to Ahab, Elijah retires to pray.* Turning from the fulfilled judgment of Jehovah, the prophet directs Ahab to go up from the brook and to eat and drink, with the assurance of speedy and abundant rain. While the king obeys his direction, Elijah seeks in a still higher part of the mountain a solitary place where he may plead with God. And in this act we read a most instructive lesson. If ever one might withhold prayer, it would seem that Elijah could have done so here. God had declared that He was about to send rain. By a quickened spiritual sense Elijah had already heard "a sound of abundance of rain." But he knew that God had made the actual descent of the rain to depend upon his prayer. Therefore did he plead so earnestly that "the heavens might give rain." Thus decisively he solves the so-called problems respecting the need and utility of prayer for God's proposed and promised blessings. Of these blessings, Christ assures us, there is no *receiving* without *asking*, no *finding* without *seeking*, no *entrance* into large possession without persistently *knocking*. Elijah believed God's Word. He set himself to seek its fulfilment. He expected the answer, looked and waited until it came. And in all this he is our example, to teach and prompt us to like faith and seeking and certain expectation of answer. Seven times his servant went to a view-point toward the sea, while the prophet remained cast down on the earth with "his face between his knees." He who had been in the crisis of trial sternly bold before king and people, now, in the hour of success, utterly abases him-



self before God. But his humility stays not his importunity. And the answer is foreshadowed with the seventh return of his servant. Upon the sea-venge of the fleckless heavens a little cloud has appeared. The sign is assurance that his prayer is answered, and the prophet sends to Ahab a hastening message of instant return to Jezreel. B.

**44. A cloud as small as a man's hand.** Geographers and travellers often tell us of those great storms of wind and rain which are thus indicated in the Levant, so that, while all around their ship there is calm and sunshine, that little speck in the sky near the horizon is so sure a symptom of the coming gale that, as quickly as possible, the sails are furled and every preparation made for the tempest that is at hand. W. M.

**45.** Palestine is still visited by those sudden storms which are so frequently alluded to in the Bible, as on the occasion of the battle of Beth-horon, and that of Barak's victory over Jabín, king of Hazor, in the plain of Esdraelon; the storm which caught the disciples on the Lake of Galilee, and that which followed the discomfiture of the priests of Baal beneath Mount Carmel, when Elijah "girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." The writer was once caught in one of these storms in the plains of Galilee. Leaving camp one bright cloudless morning with a party of Arabs, his attention was called by his companions to a small cloud in the west no larger than a man's hand, which, rising rapidly, soon overspread the heavens and burst upon the party. *Wilson.*

"It is useless to pray for rain, since that is under the control of physical laws," is the doctrine of a noted physicist of our time. "Elijah prayed to God, and it rained not for three years and six months, and he prayed again and the heaven gave rain," is the counter statement of Scripture. Which is the more truthful or scientific statement, or is there some truth in both? The Bible takes quite as strong ground as the physicist on the side of law. The weather is not with it a matter of chance, or the sport of capricious demons. God arranged it all far back in the work of creation. His laws are impartial also; for He sends His rain on the evil and the good. But the Bible knows a Law-giver beyond the law, and one who sympathizes with the spiritual condition of His people, and can so, in the complex adjustments of His work, order the times and seasons as to correlate fruitful seasons or drought and barrenness with their obedience or their backsliding. *Darwin.*

**45, 46.** *Through the falling rain Elijah runs before Ahab's chariot to Jezreel.* Rapidly gathering clouds soon followed upon Elijah's message; and "according to his word," as three years before he had said to Ahab, the rain began to fall. Homeward with speed drove the king, while the prophet, girded with superhuman strength, ran before the chariot seventeen miles to Jezreel. Though the Lord's prophet, even through the storm he thus preceded the king as a servant. This he did to show that he willingly honored Ahab, now that Ahab had outwardly honored God's authority. And this act of humility, crowning a day of so great distinction and achievement, showed that Elijah had been actuated by higher than mere human motives. It proved that he was not lifted up by the signal triumph he had won, or by the miraculous favor which God had vouchsafed. By this humble and deferential spirit he transferred the king's thought from himself to Jehovah as the real actor in the scenes that had transpired. Thus he impressed the more deeply on Ahab's mind the warning lesson of the day. B.

This day on Carmel was the culminating point of Elijah's career. Baal-worship received that day a fatal blow, and the worship of Jehovah its most signal triumph. Next to the law-giving at Sinai it is the most signal epoch in the history of Jehovah-worship that the Old Testament records. *Allon.*

**46. Carmel to Jezreel.** The great central plain of Palestine may be said almost to bisect the country from east to west. It is a wide rent, scooped out for about twelve miles in width, in its narrowest parts, from northwest to southeast. It is, however, not one even plain, but, though always open, has slight undulations. Its watershed, which is a mere imperceptible rise, is at an irregular line drawn a little to the west of Mount Tabor and Gilboa. It may be divided into three parts: 1. The coast plain, known as the *plain of Acre*, which has always been distinguished from the rest, cut off by the bold ridge of Carmel from the plain of Sharon, and on the northeast off from the Phœnician plain by a bold headland which pushes right into the sea from the Galilean hills, called Râs en Nakûra. Eastward, it is separated from the great central plain by a low, sparsely wooded ridge, through an opening at the south end of which, under Mount Carmel, the Kishon winds its tortuous way, and creeps to the sea. This part of the plain is also drained by the little classic stream of the *Belus*, and by the Wady Kurn. 2. The central plain.

more strictly that of *Jezeel* or *Esdraelon*, sometimes also the *valley of Megiddo*, stretches to the southeast, commanded on its southern edge by *Jokneam*, *Megiddo*, *Taanach*, and *En-Gannim* or *Jenin*, where it narrows to a point, and there is flanked on the east by the spurs of *Mount Gilboa*, *Jezeel*, and *Little Hermon*, or *Jebel Duhy*, and on the north by *Tabor*, the hills of *Nazareth*, and *Sefurieh*, or *Diocæsarea*. 8. To the east three branches of the plain slope gently toward the Jordan, separated by nearly isolated ranges, rising out of the plain itself; the southern portion lying between *Jenin* and *Mount Gilboa*, but not extending down to the Jordan valley. The central portion, which is the true plain of *Jezeel*, is a fine rolling slope of the greatest fertility, fenced on the south by *Gilboa*, at the eastern end of which *Bethshean*, *Beisan*, commands the Jordan valley, into which this plain imperceptibly blends, while it is separated from the northern branch by the oblong ridge of *Jebel Duhy*, or *Little Hermon*. To the north of this again a third branch of the plain stretches eastward, opening to the west between *Little Hermon* and *Mount Tabor*, and drained toward the Jordan by *Wady Bireh*. On its southern skirt, on the edge of *Little Hermon*, or *Jebel Duhy*, the *Hill of Moreh*, hang the villages of *Nain* and *Endor*. *Tristram* (see vol. iii., pp. 184, 211, 218, 353).

*Suggested Truths.*

God protects His servants in divers ways. Obadiah was kept as safely in the court of Ahab, preserved as easily from the malice of Jezebel, as Elijah in his retreats at Cherith and Zarephath.

The infirmities of a weak faith should be dealt with gently, and in the way of instruction and encouragement. Elijah assured Obadiah—he did not reproach him—in his hesitation through fear. And Christ's look was one of love—not of upbraiding—when Peter had denied Him, through a like sudden fear for himself.

In one particular, Elijah, like his antitype John the Baptist, is a model preacher. He never generalizes about "our common sinfulness." His charge of guilt is directly and sharply personal. And as it was with Elijah and John, such preaching, if from a heart constrained by the love of Christ, is always received without offence or excusing reply.

But one issue stands before the race of men. One alternative of consecration and service, before each individual of the race. *God or Self!* worship and service of one absolutely excludes

that of the other. One master must be supreme. An intermitting half-time service is impossible, since the soul cannot toss its supremely mastering affections to and fro from hour to hour. It is further impossible, because God will not accept such dishonoring attempts at service. The undivided devotion, the love and consecration of *all* the mind and soul and strength, is His single and exalting condition of acceptance, and such whole-souled service alone stands every test of life and death. It finds a responsive voice to the call of need, sustaining help and cheer in the experience of trial. And indecision respecting the demand of God for trust and service is decision against that demand. It is the *choice* of its rejection; the actual determination to distrust disobey, and forsake Him.

The whole incident furnishes a vivid suggestion of God's condescending patience with persistent transgressors. Though he visited judgment upon a few of the foremost offenders, he continued to spare the guilty king and people. And how emphatically does the whole previous and subsequent history of this favored nation illustrate the amazing patience and long suffering of God!

The spirit that directed and actuated Elijah in the arrest and execution of the false prophets has been sometimes contrasted with the spirit manifested by Christ, as though the one was utterly antagonistic to the other. And the contrast has been extended to the two great dispensations of the Old and New Testaments. A deeper and more careful study would have disclosed the truth that no such contrast or antagonism exists. The Jehovah who inspired the judgment-deed of Elijah was Jehovah Jesus, the same who inspired the like judgment-word of Peter in the doom of Ananias and Sapphira. Whatever the differences that may be traced in the *methods* of the Divine ordering and action, before and after the incarnation of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Ghost, there are no differences in the spirit of the one Jehovah Jesus who sought and directed alike all the agents He has employed in every dispensation. Love ever has been, is now, and ever shall be the basis of Divine judgment; and though they mean it not, good men dishonor God by the intimation of any essential antagonism between the elder and later dispensation on this vital matter. *They* know not "what spirit they are of."

In the constancy, closeness, and fervor of his communion with God we find the secret of Elijah's intrepidity, and the source of his strength.

In closing the fountains of heaven, in restoring the widow's dead child, in evoking the fire upon the sacrifice, in restoring the rain to the parched infertile earth, and in bringing down the destroying flame upon the bands sent for his arrest, all these signal and wondrous events were preceded by his intensely fervent prayer. All these miraculous interpositions simply prove the significant assertion of James : *The effectual (energetic) fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Explicitly referring to the miracle before us, the same Apostle declares that "Elijah was but a man, subject to like passions as we are;" thus intimating that like power with God may be attained by every believing importunate suppliant. So clearly and

forcibly are we encouraged to *continue instant in prayer, and to ask whatsoever we will!* B.

This scene on Mount Carmel is a grand representative picture of things that *are*, wherever the Gospel is preached. This congregation on Carmel is a representative congregation; and seldom does a Sabbath congregation gather in the land, that, if analyzed, will not be found to consist of the same four classes of men as this on Mount Carmel. First, a very small minority, more or less bold to confess it, decided for Jehovah. Second, a larger minority thoroughly decided for Baal. Third, a much larger minority that do not know whether Jehovah is God or not. Fourth, the majority of all who do not *care* whether Jehovah be God or not. S. R.

## Section 11.

### ELIJAH'S FLIGHT TO HOREB. JEHOVAH'S TREATMENT OF HIS DISCOURAGED SPIRIT.

1 KINGS 19 : 1-21.

1 AND Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the  
 2 prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the  
 gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow  
 3 about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-  
 4 sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's  
 journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree : and he requested  
 for himself that he might die ; and said, It is enough ; now, O LORD, take away my life ; for  
 5 I am not better than my fathers. And he lay down and slept under a juniper tree ; and,  
 6 behold, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, be-  
 hold, there was at his head a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water. And he did eat  
 7 and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time,  
 8 and touched him, and said, Arise and eat ; because the journey is too great for thee. And he  
 arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty  
 9 nights unto Horeb the mount of God. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there ;  
 and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here,  
 10 Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts ; for the chil-  
 dren of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets  
 11 with the sword : and I, even I only, am left ; and they seek my life, to take it away. And  
 he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed  
 by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the  
 LORD ; but the LORD was not in the wind : and after the wind an earthquake ; but the LORD  
 12 was not in the earthquake : and after the earthquake a fire ; but the LORD was not in the  
 13 fire : and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he  
 wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And,  
 14 behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? And he said, I  
 have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts ; for the children of Israel have for-  
 saken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword ; and I,  
 15 even I only, am left ; and they seek my life, to take it away. And the LORD said unto him,  
 Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus : and when thou comest, thou shalt

16 anoint Hazael to be king over Syria : and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king  
 over Israel : and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet  
 17 in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael  
 18 shall Jehu slay : and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet will  
 I leave *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every  
 19 mouth which hath not kissed him. So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Sha-  
 phat, who was plowing, with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth : and  
 20 Elijah passed over unto him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran  
 after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will  
 21 follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again ; for what have I done to thee? And he  
 returned from following him, and took the yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh  
 with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose,  
 and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

It has been often noted that the signal failures of the eminent men of Scripture (who were *all* "subject to like passions as we are") occurred just in the points of their peculiar excellence. As it was the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the yearning after holiness of David, the gentle tolerance of John, and the ingenuous boldness of Peter that failed, so here it is the fearless intrepidity of Elijah that yields to the force of sharp and sudden trial. Standing among the foremost of those spiritual heroes whose sublime deeds are recounted as they were incited by the Spirit of Jehovah, in distinction ranking with Moses, a man pre-eminently mighty in word and deed and in miracle, a man who left so deep and permanent an impress of energy and great achievement upon the history and heart of the Jewish people that, nine hundred years later, when the Lord of glory appeared upon earth the Jews affirmed, It is Elias!—this man, in all other circumstances and at all other periods of his career, exemplifies more signally, perhaps, than any other the qualities of unfaltering faith in God and intrepid fearlessness of man. Of a nature bold, stern, self-reliant, of an iron strength and indomitable persistency of purpose, these elements of character signalized his whole history save the incident here recorded. At Carmel, through the intense strain to which his faith was subjected, the seemingly hopeless, helpless perils by which his courage was tested, both faith and courage held out to a successful end. As one directed and protected by Jehovah, he had commanded king and people to institute the trial, and they obeyed. Consummating his intrepidity, under the same Divine direction and protection he had ordered, and himself participated in, the slaying of the priests of Baal. And afterward we discern the same undaunted courage in entering Ahab's presence alone and denouncing to the guilty king and the viler queen the ignominious, terrible end

with which God would visit them. And at the last we see this stern, unyielding character rejecting all human companionship when about to take his heavenward departure. Thus proved, both before and after, by many severest tests superior to all ordinary human weaknesses, *here*—but *only here*—his courage of soul and his otherwise unyielding faith for the time utterly gave way. The *causes of this one failure* in faith and courage, and God's kind restorative treatment, comprise the main points to be developed in this chapter. B.

No passage in Elijah's history is religiously more suggestive and comforting than this—this mood of a prophet whose achievements had been so grand and whose apotheosis was to be so triumphant, and his patient, tender treatment by Jehovah, are alike full of consolation. *Allon.*

1-7. Jezebel's heart is unmoved, alike by the tokens of God's terrible power recited to her and by the manifest sign of His returning favor to the land. She thirsts for Elijah's blood to avenge the destruction of Baal's priests. At her forewarning of pursuit and death, the prophet is stunned with sudden fear. Looking only at his fierce foe (*when he saw that*, the record says), and failing, like Peter on the waves, to look to his Lord, the interposing power of God consequently failed him for the time. He flies from the threatened peril. Hitherto he had gone when and where God had bade him. Now, without Divine direction, from Jezreel he hastens southward through the kingdom of Judah ninety miles to Beersheba. Thence going a day's journey into the wilderness, he casts himself down under a solitary broom tree, and asks that God would take to Himself his overburdened spirit. The simple expression *It is enough!* intimates the thoroughly discouraged state of his mind. But even in his discouragement the tone of his prayer is elevated and touching. He does not

weakly fret or repine. With the old boldness of an honest and faithful heart he affirms his own conclusions: "My work for Thee, O Lord, is done! Take me now to Thyself! Already Thou hast fully honored me! I deserve no more than those who have gone before me!"

But God will not take him in so inglorious a way and time. The Lord will not seal that shaming ministry while so heavy a cloud rests upon it, nor take the strong spirit while bowed in its gloom. Radiantly and triumphantly his work and life are to close. *Now*, in answer to the prayer for death, God sends him bodily food in intimation that *He* would have him *live*. He sends by a higher ministry than the ravens or the poor widow—by an *angel*, as still more assuring. And He proceeds to deal graciously and wisely with Elijah, suiting His treatment to that strong, heroic spirit. *First, with alternate sleep and food.* He restores and miraculously strengthens the prophet's exhausted body and mind. The intense excitement of the day at Carmel, followed by the seventeen miles of running to Jezreel, and the added journey from Jezreel to Beersheba, were causes enough to exhaust the strongest human frame, apart from his present great distress of spirit. A special recuperating force is imparted by the rest and the angel's supply of food. So Elijah is prepared for the "great journey" which is indicated to him by the angel, about two hundred miles. B.

2. As simply a specimen of human nature painting, there is nothing equal to the Jezebel of Scripture in all the circle of literature. The strokes of the pencil are indeed very few. It is an outline, with no filling up of the details, as in the tragic poets. Yet the student who will take the pains to gather from the record and study this outline will find the Jezebel of Scripture stand out before him with more distinctness than the Medea of Euripides or the Lady Macbeth of Shakespeare. The mere outline sets her forth with a power, and vividness, and a gigantic grandeur of wickedness, yet withal a naturalness that no human genius has ever equalled. S. R.—This history may well astound us with its illustrations of the terrible influence of *one bad woman*. What Satanic energy of will! What bold ingenuity! What seductive power over her husband toward wickedness! We might have supposed that no mind less mighty than Satan's could throw itself into the face of such a movement as that inaugurated on Mt. Carmel and block it utterly; but apparently Jezebel was equal to it, and did it! H. C.

It is worthy of note that this is the first great religious persecution that history records; and of all the subjects of religious persecution Elijah is the most dramatic and heroic. Such persecution was the necessary condition of prophetic greatness, and Elijah was great enough to become its hero. Elijah was the first to teach the world the lofty duty of resisting organized wrong, even at the cost of martyrdom. He was the first of the great roll of confessors who, against kings and national systems, have witnessed for God and truth. The three Hebrew youths, Daniel, Stephen, the Apostles of our Lord, the early Christians, Wycliffe, Savonarola, Huss, Luther, the noble army of the reformers and faithful witnesses for Christ, down to the Malagasy martyrs, must recognize him as their illustrious prototype. He first vindicated the sacred rights of the religious conscience against all its persecutors in the world or in the Church. *Allon.*

3. What is the solution of this paradox, that a man is running for his life and yet praying to die? It is, indeed, inconsistent enough, yet never was painting truer to the life of a saint of God in darkness and desertion. The clue to the whole mystery is that Jehovah has not said to Elijah, "Arise and flee," as before He had said, "Go show thyself to Ahab," or "Arise, get thee to Zarephath." The record simply states that, hearing Jezebel's fierce oath, Elijah "arose and went for his life." Once the communication between Elijah and Jehovah is broken, he is just as inconsistent and weak as any of us. Well did the Apostle James say, "Elijah was a man of like passions with us." S. R.

4. All day he travelled, and found no refuge; and in the evening, worn out with fatigue and consumed with hunger, he cast himself down under the shelter of one of the broom trees, which alone flourish in that wilderness. Here this lately strong-souled man lay hopeless, helpless, and despairing; and he who fled so anxiously from death prayed for himself that he might die. "It is enough; O Lord God, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." Strange contradiction! Here the man who was destined not to taste of death flees from death on the one hand, and seeks it on the other! And who told him it was "enough"? God did not; *He* knew what was enough for him to do and to suffer. It was not enough. God had more to teach him, and had more work for him to do. If the Lord had taken him at his word, and had also said it was "enough," Elijah's history would have wanted its crowning glory. *Kitto.*

If Elijah can become weak and his courage die out, who shall stand? The lessons of self-distrust, of the nearness to one another of the most opposite emotions in our weak natures, of the depth of gloom into which the boldest and brightest servant of God may fall as soon as he loses hold of God's hand, never had a more striking instance to point them than that mighty prophet, sitting in utter despondency below the solitary retem bush, praying his foolish prayer for death. A. M.—Despondency in the midst of severe contest, who has never had to wrestle with this? and he who has hitherto been preserved from it, what guarantee has he that he shall not to-morrow lie down like the stern prophet of the wilderness, under his juniper-tree? Disappointed expectation, increasing conflict and wavering faith, each of these three is in itself sufficient to deprive us of courage and strength; what, then, if they, as here in the case of Elijah, all storm at once on the weary soul? How will this *end* with Elijah if God does not Himself step in, but that he should become an unprofitable servant of the Most High, an indocile pupil of His providence, a murmuring rebel against His adorable sovereignty, who sins even in his prayers? *Van O.*

5, 6. Toil and sorrow have lulled the prophet asleep, under his juniper tree. That wholesome shade was well chosen for his repose. While death was called for, the cousin of death comes unbidden. The angel of God waits on him in that hard lodging. No wilderness is too solitary for the attendance of those blessed spirits. As he is guarded so is he awaked by that messenger of God, and stirred up from his rest to his repast. While he slept his breakfast is made ready for him by those spiritual hands; "there was a cake baked on the coals and a cruse of water at his head." Oh, the never-ceasing care and providence of the Almighty; not to be barred by any place, by any condition! When means are wanting to us, when we are wanting to ourselves, when to God, even then doth He follow us with His mercy, and cast favors upon us, beyond, against expectation. What variety of purveyance doth he make for his servant! One while the ravens, then the Sareptan, now the angel shall be his caterer; none of them without a miracle. Those other provided for him waking; this, sleeping. O God, the eye of Thy providence is not dimmer, the hand of Thy power is not shorter: only teach Thou us to serve Thee, to trust Thee. *Bp. H.*

7. The fatherly tenderness of God is nowhere in the Old Testament more touchingly brought

out than here, where he waits, as it were, while the weary prophet sleeps again after his meal, and sends the angel a second time to remind him of the provision for his bodily wants, which he would be so likely to forget. *Houghton.*

The meal to which an angel twice waked him was God's answer to his prayer, telling him both that his life was still needful and that God cared for him. God for the third time miraculously provides his food. The ravens, the widow of Zarephath, an angel, were his caterers; and, instead of taking away his life, God himself sends the bread and water to preserve it. The revelation of a watchful, tender providence often rebukes gloomy unbelief and shames us back to faith. A. M.

The spiritual food which God gave Elijah answers to truth, the true and real in everything. It is a strange alchemy, but it is a literal fact, that the grace of God in the heart can turn stones to bread. There is an idea, a lesson, a picture, a caution, a comfort everywhere. God has enshrined all truth in Christ. He is the true and living Bread, which is the "life of the world." We must appropriate this food, and we shall go in the strength of it many days. *J. Vaughan.*

8. *The journey to Horeb, and the forty days' fast.* Horeb is one of the Sinai group of mountains central to the southern part of the Arabian peninsula, itself rising to the height of seven or eight thousand feet. From the appearances of God upon this mountain to Moses, and from the giving of the law, it is called the "Mount of God." It is not strange, then, that Elijah, the great restorer of the law, should be guided to this sacred mountain. It is natural that he, who stood with Moses beside the transfigured Christ, should tread in the steps and share in the high experience of Moses upon the original holy mount. So, under circumstances dissimilar, with like purpose of special Divine instruction and manifestation, Elijah is led to Horeb. And, like Moses, and like the incarnate Lord Himself, Elijah fasts forty days in the wilderness. Alike they all fasted thus, "perhaps to intimate the likeness of their commissions, to propose, to restore, and to perfect the law, by God's last and best gift, the Gospel; of which Moses and Elijah were witnesses with Christ at His transfiguration." In the opportunity for quiet thoughtfulness during those forty days of the prophet's journeying and resting, in his receiving and pondering afresh the lessons of the old history imprinted upon every step of the way, and especially conveyed by the sacred associations of the

mountain, we may find a *second particular of God's restoring treatment* of His disheartened servant. B.

God knows what he designs us for, though we do not, what services, what trials, and will take care for us, when we for want of foresight cannot for ourselves, that we be furnished for them with *grace sufficient*. He that appoints what the voyage shall be will victual the ship accordingly. See how many different ways God took to keep Elijah alive; and now, to show that *man lives not by bread alone*, he kept him alive forty days without meat, not resting and sleeping, which might make him the less to crave sustenance, but continually traversing the mazes of the desert, a day for a year of Israel's wanderings; yet he neither needs food, nor desires it. The place, no doubt, reminds him of the manna, and encourages him to hope that God would sustain him here, and, in due time, bring him hence, as he did Israel, though, like him, fretful and distrustful. H.

Elijah, faint and exhausted, begged that he might die, but Elijah, fed and refreshed, rose and went in strength through a forty days' journey. Satan is a cowardly assailant, who loves to take us at a disadvantage, as he assailed our Lord when He was a-hungred. When the body is shattered he will shake the soul with pains. We should ask, therefore, when sad or depressed, Is it because I have been more wicked than usual or have more real trouble, or is it only because I am weak in health and so more sensitive? To be depressed because we are feeble and so fearful, would be about as sensible as to be depressed because we were hungry when food was before us. Use the remedy, and the evil will be more tolerable. Paul, after three days of gloom, received meat, and was strengthened. But the grace of God is our great help in practising upon these precepts. Sufficient to the day is the evil, and sufficient to the evil is the grace offered. *W. H. Lewis.*

**9, 10.** *God's question and Elijah's answer.* In this question we discern a *still further step in God's treatment*. The bodily invigoration, and the long restful period for reflection, have failed to bring back right thoughts and trustful feeling. Elijah has not yet realized his defection and distrust in fleeing from Jezebel's threat, when unbidden by God. Therefore the mild reproof: *What doest thou here?* The prophet's answer shows that he understood and felt the rebuke. But he speaks boldly in justification of his withdrawal. And God forbears, once and again, with his boldness because of

his truth. The reply, in its three particulars, discloses a condition of utter, hopeless discouragement. Three things, according to his own showing, combined to break down his brave spirit. For the time they paralyzed his intrepid faith.

1. He was discouraged by an imagined want of success, *a conviction of failure*. At Carmel he had "been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts." He had stood alone for God, and had triumphed in His name. The idolatrous prophets had been destroyed. Israel again had openly acknowledged Jehovah, and His favor had released their land from the interdict of barrenness. Seemingly in a single day and by a single deed the prophet's life aim and work had been achieved. But on the very next day his work seemed wasted; his hope was dead. With the one shout of the people apparently ceased all their interest in a true, pure worship. Ahab, unmoved by all that had occurred, suffered Jezebel's murderous purpose to go forward. She would triumph over the *cause* he had championed. No sign from heaven appeared; no voice from God was heard. It seemed that God had no more for *him* to do. His flight was not to save his life, but to prevent its being taken by Jezebel. For he *asks the Lord to take it*. And, connected with this conviction of failure,

2. *A sense of human desertion*, loneliness from lack of all sympathy in his bold stand for God, was another source of discouragement, and cause of failure in his faith and courage. "I, even I *only*, am left!" He had not felt his loneliness or craved sympathy before. During the great trial he was nerved by the Divine command, and by an issue grand enough to call into full play the mighty energies of his nature. But ever since, in his ear, the voice of the fickle multitude seemed a mocking, taunting echo. Resolute and unyielding as he was, this repeated thrusting back of disagreeable memories of solitary and fruitless endeavor, stirred the heart's native craving after some sympathy, human or Divine. But no voice of comfort broke upon his desolate perturbed spirit. 3. Closely joined with this feeling of desolation was the *want of any assigned aggressive work*. This would have been solace enough for his strong nature; something to be resisted or grappled with, or some great peril to be encountered. Had God bidden him brave the haughty queen's wrath when her threatening message came, he would unflinchingly have done it. But no voice came to him; no call for that moral struggle he craved and for which he was fitted. Only physical force was to be set

upon him ; and Jezebel's triumph by his murder would obliterate all he had done, and set back the cause of God. This was the state of mind which induced Elijah's justifying answer. These were the chief causes of his single failure in faith during a long life of signal heroism for God. B.

**9. Cave.** The parallel between Moses and Elijah is very real. These two names stand out above all others in the history of theocracy, the one as the founder, the other as the restorer ; both distinguished by special revelations, both endowed with exceptional force of character and power of the spirit ; the one the lawgiver, the other the head of the prophetic order ; both having something peculiar in their departure, and both standing together, in witness of their supremacy in the past and of their inferiority in the future, by Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. The associations of the place are marked by the use of the definite article, which is missed in the Authorized Version—"the cave," that same cleft in the rock where Moses had stood. That question, "What doest thou here?" can scarcely be freed from a tone of rebuke ; but, like Christ's to the travellers to Emmaus, and many another interrogation from God, it is also put in order to allow of the loaded heart's relieving itself by pouring out all its griefs. God's questions are the assurance of His listening ear and sympathizing heart. A. M.

**11, 12. Jehovah manifesting Himself in natural forces, and speaking by His Spirit.** Wisely and effectually He interposes to reach and relieve the prophet's tempest-tossed, discouraged heart. Before repeating his gentle reproof, He will instruct Elijah respecting the character of the instruments by which He successfully works among men, the real conditions of failure or success. The method He employs is unusual, but exactly suited to the man and the end aimed at. In those sublime displays of superhuman might—"the great and strong wind that rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks," the upheaving and convulsion of Horeb itself from base to summit, and the fierce flame filling the air around and above—there was a purposed ministry of soothing. For they were in strange keeping with the mood of Elijah's stern, excited spirit. Yet in all these he was made to realize that God was not ! But following these, after brief, solemnly impressive silence, there fell upon his ear and sank deep into his heart a still small voice. It was, he knew, the voice of the Lord ! How plain the lesson ! How admirably fitted to correct his er-

roneous belief ! Not by miracle of might, such as had taken place on Carmel, would God work out His gracious purposes with men. Useful, needful as such astounding manifestations might occasionally be to intimidate or arouse, the real work upon the hearts of Israel would be wrought only by the silent, unseen ministries of the Spirit. Not in the bold spirit of conflict, that would measure strength continually with the powers of evil, but in the gentler spirit that speaks the truth in love, and relies upon the silent, inward efficacy of the Holy Ghost. B.

There are gorges near Sinai where at times the wind rushes with such fury that neither man nor beast can stand before the blast ; rocks are loosened and hurled across the path, and the mountains bellow with tempest. There are signs that the earthquake has shaken those stupendous masses of rock from base to summit, opening new chasms, and dislodging ancient cliffs. Sometimes the violence of the wind is aggravated by the roar of thunder, and lightnings seem to belch forth from the mountain-tops as from a glaring furnace. In all these grand and terrible phenomena of Nature, Jehovah had spoken from Sinai at the giving of the law ; and Elijah naturally looked for Him in like manifestations. But the Lord came to him in the still small voice, rebuking the timidity that distrusted the Lord after the miracles of fire and tempest at Mt. Carmel had ceased. Not miracles alone testify to the presence of God, but equally the silent operation of moral causes, the gradual development of truth, light, and love. Our faith in Providence is distorted when we are always straining after marvels, watching for signs of tempest and earthquake, hearing no voices of the night, seeing no wonders in the dawn. In the moral world, seedtime and harvest are constant, the storm and fire the exceptions. The most potent forces in physical nature, light and heat, are silent in their coming and their working ; and, in the moral world, that Coming which has wrought the greatest marvels was in the silence of the night and the lowliness of the manger ; that Character which has caused the greatest revolutions in human life and society was His who said, "I am meek and lowly of heart." Oh, let us humbly, gently, learn of Him ! J. P. T.

God is quiet in His workings. Mighty as are His vast machineries in nature, all move quietly in the fulness of His everlasting power. His spirit is quiet as "a still small voice," though its working is wide as the world. The



heavens are quiet while they declare His glory. Comets, meteors, wandering stars, rush and stagger in their courses, but the great orbs that light the steady flow of ages roll in quiet on their way. Christ, the great revelation of God to man, was quiet in the days of His flesh. He did not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. We should be like Him. *Anon.*

The Lord first passeth by him with the terrible demonstrations of His power—"A great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake the rocks in pieces." The tearing blast was from God; God was not in it: so was He in it as in His other extraordinary works; not so in it as by it to impart Himself to Elijah. It was the usher, not the carriage, of God. After the wind came an earthquake, more fearful than it. That did but move the air; this, the earth; that beat upon some prominences of earth; this shook it from the centre. After the earthquake came a fire, more fearful than either. The other affected the ear, the feeling; but this lets in horror into the soul by the eye, the quickest and most apprehensive of the senses. Elijah shall see God's mighty power in the earth, air, fire, before he hear Him in the soft voice. All these are but boisterous harbingers of a meek and still word. In that God was. Behold, in that gentle and mild breath there was omnipotency; there was but powerfulness in those fierce representations. There is not always the greatest efficacy where is the greatest noise. God loves to make way for Himself by terror; but he conveys Himself to us in sweetness. It is happy for us if, after the gusts and flashes of the law, we have heard the soft voice of evangelical mercy. *Bp. H.*

The answer comes in wonderfully dramatic and vivid symbols, which are not only perfectly congruous with the character of the entire history, but also full of resemblance to His own vehement mood; the wind, the earthquake, the fire, in which God was not, followed by the still small voice in which God was, were manifestly designed to teach Elijah a great lesson concerning God's ways of working. Not by great manifestations of physical power, not by coercive and destructive means, does God accomplish spiritual processes, but by means which are silent, gentle, and suasive. Spiritual forces are always such; such were the characteristics of our Lord's ministry—"He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." So it is of all ministries which achieve the greatest and profoundest spiritual processes. Achievements of miraculous vindic-

ation and of avenging bloodshed, such as those of Carmel, are not the true spiritual forces of God's kingdom. God might sanction them, He might be in them, as in many analogous processes in the after history of His Church, and in the experiences of individual men; but in a much higher and more transforming sense He is in agencies and processes that have the still small voice for their type. It was a lesson in the true methods of Divine working that would not only correct and instruct the prophet, but would also comfort him. It would rebuke his yearning for more palpable judgments or miracles; it would qualify his estimate of what had really been effected on Carmel; and it would encourage him by the suggestion that in thousands of hidden Israelitish hearts quiet, unrecognized spiritual processes were going on. *Allon.*

It is the same lesson which Moses learned there, when he heard that the Lord is "a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth." It was exemplified in the gentle Elisha, the successor of Elijah. It reached far beyond the time then present, and is indeed a Messianic prophecy, declaring the inmost character of him in whom "the Lord is," in an altogether special sense. Elijah as a prophet brought no new knowledge, and uttered no far-reaching predictions; but he received one of the deepest and clearest prophecies of the gentleness of God's highest messenger, and on Horeb saw afar off what he saw fulfilled on the mountain of Transfiguration. Nor is his vision exhausted by its Messianic reference. It contains an eternal truth for all God's servants. Storm, earthquake, and fire may be God's precursors, and needed sometimes to prepare His way; but gentleness is "the habitation of His throne," and they serve Him best and are nearest Him whom they serve, who are meek in heart and gentle among enemies, "as a nurse cherisheth her children." Love is the victor, and the sharpest weapons of the Christian are love and lowliness. *A. M.*

There is a quiet deepening and strengthening of the spiritual forces in the soul, which every one who seeks it finds. But it is a silent work. So noiseless, so powerful are the energizings of the gentle, persuasive, penetrating, almighty Spirit of God. Believers who live during this dispensation of the Spirit miss the profoundest part of His holy ministration if they know nothing of this sweet, potential, silent tuition. Silent communion, noiseless revelation, voiceless teaching—these are the sources of Christian power. It would encourage us could we see

how to-day God is working on the hearts of men with His silent, attractive power. How bold and sure our service of Him would be if we wholly believed in the vast reserve of effectual, silent energy with which He reinforces every act or word for Him! If any heart responds to the messages of mercy which we bear, we may be sure God has been before us, with His noiseless work of preparation. H. C. T.

**13-18.** *The question and answer repeated; subsequent directions and assurance of Jehovah.* The loudest, fiercest voices of the elements Elijah could hear without any conscious appeal to heart or conscience. But the still small voice of the present God reached and bowed his soul; while reverently "he wrapped his face in his mantle." Then while he was still meditating upon the lesson, when in answer to the same question, his naturally self-willed spirit faintly repeated the reasons before assigned, God graciously proceeds to complete the treatment and the cure. He bids Elijah at once to arise, return, and fulfil the work still before him. He assigns him at the outset a specific work (15, 16), adapted to his brave, commanding spirit. And to take away all remnant of his discouragement, He assures the prophet that his ministry at Carmel and other ministries still existing among the people had not failed; that many (seven indicating an indefinite number) thousand hearts were still true to Jehovah; and these had been secretly strengthened and comforted by his manly courage and unyielding faith. So from these instructive acts and impressive lessons of Jehovah, he departed to execute his commission—a wiser and more useful man. His faith in God, his indomitable spirit, and his superiority over human weakness, held firm and unmoved until alone he was borne in the flame-chariot to heaven.

A word respecting the directions given to Elijah. How the command to anoint Hazael and Jehu was fulfilled we do not know, but that in its *meaning*, which Elijah understood, it was obeyed, we are assured. Hazael became the enemy and oppressor of Israel; and Jehu was God's instrument in the terrible punishment of Ahab and Jezebel, of the seventy sons of Ahab, and of vast numbers of Baal's worshippers. The concluding verses (19-21) show that Elijah called Elisha to the chief prophetic office by casting his mantle upon him. He might also have subsequently anointed him. The inspired record carefully selects all and only the important facts. The unimportant and therefore vaguely reported matters fur-

nish the main topics for sceptical question and discussion. B.

**13, 14.** Tranquillity now reigns once more, and the solemn stillness of the sanctuary, as though Horeb, Sinai, mountain cliffs and sand-deserts, aroused from their slumber, are all lying in mute awe and adoration at the feet of Jehovah. A "still small voice" at length breaks the silence, and, though repeating the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" yet, somehow, now its accents seem to murmur softly in the very depths of his soul. It is a tender, gentle, complaining voice, as that which said in Gethsemane—"What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" It breaks Elijah's heart. Abashed, confused, humbled, he covers his face with his mantle; and though he too utters the same words in response, yet how changed their tone and spirit! It is in the accents of a subdued and humbled child—those wailing accents at once of penitence and confidence, which never yet father, that was not a monster, could resist. "I have been very jealous for Jehovah;" thou knowest how sincerely I grieved at the dishonor of His name. Israel—poor children of the covenant—led astray by servants of the devil, has apostatized. Thy prophets, the witnesses for the truth, have all been slain. No other voice than mine remains to be lifted up in testimony for Jehovah. And me they persecute to the death. S. R.

**15, 16.** We must interpret the meaning of the command in accordance with the prophet's action, judging that he understood what was intended by the words. The word "anoint" is used concerning Jehu and Elisha as well as Hazael; and we know that Elijah did not anoint Elisha, though he could easily have done so, but only made known, by the act of casting his prophetic mantle upon him, that he was called to that office. In the same way then we may understand the rest of the Divine order. Elijah was to receive assurance for himself, and to make known that assurance to others, as he found occasion, that God was still ruling Israel both from without and from within, and would call to the throne of Syria one who should execute His judgments upon His rebellious people, and to the throne of Israel one who should destroy Baal and his worship out of the land. We shall not err, it seems, if we suppose that the knowledge which Elisha had (2 K. 8: 13) when he says, "The Lord hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria," was derived from Elijah's communication, as also the instruction which led him, at a future day (2 K. 9: 1, 2), to send one of the sons of the prophets to Ramoth-Gil-

ead to anoint Jehu. Hence "anoint" in the text becomes equivalent to "point them out as the anointed ones." *Lumby.*

The commissions given to anoint a king of Syria and one of Israel were not fulfilled by Elijah, but by his successor; and we have to suppose that further commands were given to him on that subject. The third injunction, to anoint his successor, was done at once on his journey, though Abel-meholah, on Gilboa, was dangerously near Jezreel. The designation of these future instruments of God's purpose was at once a sign to Elijah that his own work was drawing to a close (having reached its climax on Carmel), and that God had great designs beyond him and his service. The true conception of our work is that we are only links in a chain, and that we can be done without. God removes the workers and carries on the work. Further, the commissions met Elijah's despondency in another way; for they assured him of the Divine judgments on the house of Ahab, and of the use of the Syrian king as a rod to chastise Israel. He had thought God too slow in avenging His dishonored name, and had been taught the might of gentleness; but now he also learns the certainty of punishment, while the enigmatical promise that Elisha should "slay" those who escaped the swords of Hazael and Jehu dimly points to that merciful energy of the prophet's word, his only sword, which shall slay but to revive, and wound to heal. "I have hewed them by the words of my mouth." Finally (verse 18), the revelation of the seven thousand—a round number, which expresses the sacredness as well as the numerosness of the elect, hidden ones—rebukes the hasty assumption of his being left alone, faithful among the faithless. God has more servants than we know of. Let us beware of feeding either our self-righteousness or our narrowness or our faint-heartedness with the fancy that we have a monopoly of faithfulness, or are left alone to witness for God. A. M.

Thus reanimated for his remaining work, he was sent to prepare for three great changes affecting the state of Israel: to anoint Hazael as the future king of Syria, in place of Benhadad; Jehu, the son of Nimshi, as king of Israel, in place of Ahab's house; and Elisha, the son of Shaphat, to be prophet in succession to himself. These three were to follow each other in the destruction of the worshippers of Baal. Elijah only performed in person the last of the three acts, the designation of Elisha, leaving to him the other two, which he himself found no opportunity to execute. P. S.

**17.** Hazael, Jehu, Elisha—all the three were to be instruments of the Divine wrath, and ministers of the Divine vengeance upon degenerate Israel. The execution of judgment against sinful Israel may be clearly traced in the case of each of the three persons named. For after Hazael succeeded to the throne of Syria he was a constant thorn in the side of Israel. We read that in these days "the Lord began to cut Israel short," and that "Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel" (2 K. 10 : 32); that a little later "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael, king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad, son of Hazael, all their days;" while it is even said in yet stronger language, that the king of Syria had "made them like the dust by threshing" (2 K. 18 : 3, 7). If Hazael thus scourged Israel as a people, still more did Jehu scourge Ahab and Jezebel and all their house. So terrible was the work of extermination upon which he entered when he took possession of the throne, that it has been justly described as one "hitherto unparalleled in the history of the Jewish monarchy." Nor did Jehu prove himself less the scourge of those worshippers of Baal with whom Ahab's house had been so closely identified. And Elisha was also in like manner a warning and a scourge to the idolaters of his time.

**18.** These words immediately follow: "Yet will I leave me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." The words, as correctly given in the Revised Version, contain more than an intimation that, though Elijah had thought himself alone, there were seven thousand in Israel still faithful to the truth. They are also a promise that, amid all the judgments that were to follow, seven thousand would be found worthy to escape them, because they would refuse to yield to the general apostasy of the people. The promise, when correctly interpreted, implies more than it is generally supposed to include—not merely that at that moment there was a remnant according to the election of grace, and that Elijah did not stand alone in his allegiance to the Almighty, but that that election would be preserved through all the judgments that were to follow. There were times of heavy trial in store for the Church of God in Israel, in the midst of which many would fall and be overwhelmed. Yet, whatever might happen to the merely outward members of the body, the Lord knew them that were His. W. M.

*The Lord knows them that are His, though*

we do not ; He sees them in secret. There are more good people in the world than some wise and holy men think there are. Their jealousy of themselves, and for God, makes them think the corruption is universal ; but God sees not as they do. God's love often proves larger than man's charity, and more extensive. H.

So the fainting prophet is restored. A new body has the Divine Physician prepared him and a new spirit has He put within him. And with faith and courage comes hope. To the eyes of the recovered prophet there is a future for God and His kingdom. Elijah now knows that God will remain in the world-field even after he himself finally departs ; so he begins to reach forth the anointing hand to marshal the forces which shall win in the coming days of the Lord. It is a great thing for a prophet—ay, a great thing for a man—to be brought beyond the power of doubting that God is in this world to stay—in this world for victory after victory until every foe is vanquished. Such a one will fall into his little grave with eye strained to catch the bursting glory and hand reached forth to grasp the banner of the coming Lord. *S. S. Mitchell.*

**19, 20.** Leaving Horeb, and again traversing the great desert of the wandering, Elijah again enters Judah, probably by Beersheba and Hebron ; but, avoiding Jerusalem, he descends through Engedi into the great Jordan valley ; ascending it he comes to a field at Abel-meholah in the north, where he finds Elisha ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, himself with the twelfth. For three years and a half this was the first spring-time that gave promise of a harvest, and we may imagine the joyous toil of the husbandmen. The appearance of Elijah was sudden and startling. Apparently without speaking a word, Elijah throws his prophet's mantle over the shoulders of the young farmer—a well-understood symbolical act—and passes on. Whatever Elisha may have felt, he expresses no surprise, utters no remonstrance either of unwillingness or modesty ; but leaving his plough, he runs after Elijah, accepts his calling, and simply requests permission to bid his family farewell. In laconic speech, strange as his abrupt action, Elijah bids him go : " Go, and return, for thou knowest what I have done unto thee." Elisha turns back for this purpose, and kills the yoke of oxen with which he had been ploughing, for a farewell feast, as well perhaps as to indicate his renunciation of his old calling, and then follows Elijah. And for the next six years, during which we hear nothing of Elijah's do-

ings, his solitary spirit was to find companionship in the gentle, soothing ministry of this young prophetic Timothy. The chief thought with Elijah would be that his mission was ended, and his successor appointed—" Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." It is a strange succession : Elijah, the rough Bedouin of Mount Gilead, the prophet of fire—Elisha, the gentle son of a pastoral home, a herdsman of the valley ; the one a Boanerges, the other a Barnabas. Yet such is the succession whereby God carries on His work, and whereby it is best carried on ; these men represent the two elements that must enter, perhaps alternately, into all great spiritual work. *Allon.*

Elisha's native place was at Abel-meholah (the *meadow'of the dance*), a place in the valley of the Jordan, near its junction with the plain of Jezreel. He was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, himself guiding the twelfth, a proof of the wealth he abandoned to " put his hand to the plough" of Jehovah, when Elijah arrived on his way up the valley toward Damascus, and, without saying a word, cast his prophet's mantle upon Elisha, as if claiming him for a son. Elisha, with a heart prepared by God, only begged to give his father and mother a parting embrace, and Elijah consented, in words implying a keen feeling of Elisha's separation from his parents and home. P. S.

The act of Elijah, as, in passing by, he unfastened his mantle and threw it over Elisha, was deeply significant. It meant that the one was to appear like the other—that he was to hold the same office, and to discharge the same functions. With the quickness of a ready heart, the son of Shaphat understood the meaning of this action. It was not to a position of wealth, of ease, or of influence he now felt called. On the contrary, all this had to be relinquished. He, a man of peace, was called from home, friends, and comforts, to endure hardship, to suffer persecution, to bear scorn. Yet he offered not frivolous excuses nor unbelieving objections, but arose and followed the Master. Elijah had passed on, as if unconcerned how Elisha received the call. It had been addressed to him, and it was his part voluntarily to decide for or against its acceptance. This explains what follows in the narrative. Hastening after the prophet, Elisha requested permission to bid farewell to his family and friends ; or, as Matthew Henry puts it, he would " *take leave, not ask leave.*" The answer of Elijah, " Go back, for what have I done unto thee?" is intended not as a rebuke, but as

a trial. It meant, in effect, Unless your heart fully responds, if it fondly lingers on the past, go back to your home. A. E.

21. The feast here partaken of was not an ordinary festival, but a feast after a sacrifice. It was the pledge that those who partook of it were in covenant with God, that they had surrendered themselves to His service, and that they were at peace with Him. Looked at in this light, the whole transaction now recorded assumes an aspect wholly different from that in which we commonly regard it. Instead of supplying evidence of even momentary hesitation upon Elisha's part, it indicates that the future prophet not only renounced the world, but that he was desirous to tell the world that he did so. And if it shows that he had tender affections and friendly feelings, it shows also that he had learned from the moment when Elijah cast his mantle upon him to count all things but loss for the excellency of the service to which he had then been summoned. The force and vigor of Elisha's character appear as conspicuously in this scene as they do in every other action of his life. W. M.—When that call came it was obeyed without a question. He asked not to what it would lead, or where he was to go. There was no bargaining with God. The response was immediate and unequivocal. It was, "Here am I, send me," of one of after days. It is this ready obedience that honors God. F. Whitfield.

#### *Suggested Truths.*

God's mightiest, most productive working in nature, His wisest, most radical, and effective movements in providence, including all useful and permanent effects wrought in the advance of civilization and the growth of the Church, and His enlightening and transforming force within the individual soul, all alike are mainly produced by silent, invisible, and seemingly inadequate agencies. B.

The silent affections, the splendors of an interior devotion, the unions of love, humility, and obedience, the daily offices of prayer and praises sung to God, the acts of faith and fear, of patience and meekness, of hope and reverence, repentance and charity, and those graces which walk in a veil and silence, make great ascents to God, and as sure progress to favor and a crown as the more ostentatious and laborious exercises of a more solemn religion. Many times God is present in the "still voice" and private retirements of a quiet religion, and the constant spiritualities of an ordinary life; when the loud and impetuous winds, and the shining

fires of far more laborious and expensive actions, are profitable to others only. Bp. J. Taylor.

The allegory wrought out by such terrific symbols on Horeb, taken in connection with the ultimate failure of Elijah's popular demonstration at Carmel, conveys this most instructive truth: that the means and agencies which ensure success in spiritual undertakings are not the visible and demonstrative, not those which are apparently popular and striking. They are found alone in the quiet ministry of the truth by the Spirit. The true work of God in human hearts is not carried on by the mere stimulus of popular preaching and the consequent excitement of listening throngs, or by any of the accessory methods by which sensation is produced. It is wrought by the faithful, persistent inculcation of pure truth, directed and accompanied by the unseen ministry, gentle but resistless, of the Holy Spirit. B.

There are many professors of religion who are never happy except they see a revival. They only live fully in an atmosphere of sensation and excitement. They crave for electric conversions, for a ministry of signs and wonders. They are dissatisfied and unhappy when the Church of God is at its normal pulse, working quietly yet steadily, silently yet solidly, at the building of the Lord's Temple. The lesson many need in these days is, that God's best work is not done by miracles but by ordinary agencies. And the true test of religion, the proof whereby our attachment to God's work is to be evinced, lies in steady effort under commonplace conditions, in faithfulness in little things. "God," writes Mr. Ruskin in an eloquent passage in "Modern Painters"—"God is not in the earthquake nor in the lightning, but in the still small voice. They are but the blunt and low faculties of our nature, which can only be addressed through lampblack and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty; the deep, and the calm and the perpetual, that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood; things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet very eternally, which are never wanting, and never repeated; which are to be found always, yet each found but once. It is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught and the blessing of beauty given." Interior.

Wonderfully does Christ's way on earth confirm the teaching of this Divine manifestation on Horeb. Never did He put forth the terrible might locked up in His hand, except in ministries of gentleness, or in confirmation of His

calm and loving words. Except against conscious hypocrites, destroyers of souls, *His was ever the still small voice*, unheard in the streets. "The bruised reed he did not break, nor quench the smoking flax."

As with the "elders who obtained a good report," so now *every true follower of God has points and periods of special weakness*; and his chief failures and defections lie exactly in the line and at the point of his peculiar excellencies. This fact rightly interpreted (in the light of this Old Testament history) may afford comfort to the consciously self-consecrated believer in his occasional lapses from duty. And it answers the error or cavil of the unbeliever, who sees the Christian's defection, but not his after-sorrow toward God.

Where there is *truth in the heart*, God's forbearance is very great with human weaknesses and defections, however extreme. Even more impressively is this illustrated in the cases of Abraham, Jacob, and David, and in those of Moses and Elijah. And Christ forbore with all sinners save hypocrites.

The *faithful laborer* sometimes makes Elijah's double mistake—of *thinking his labor useless*, and that *his work for God is done*. But God's wise, kind interposition always corrects this mistake. And gladly, bravely the worker goes on, waiting until God shall intimate that his work is finished.

*God's remedy for a discouraged, disquieted, lonely heart, is twofold: Work and Trust!* Yielding to despondency, repining or retiring before disappointment, or folding the hands in the protracted indulgence of even a desolating grief, are acts of unbelief, of selfish weakness, and moral cowardice. No believer, however sorely stricken, has here a right to a prolonged rest of inaction. No sorrowing, burdened heart may rightly say "It is enough! Let me now die!" For with life there is work to which God bids us set every energy of our nature. And in work is found the best relief and firmest support. *Trust, too, with work!* Trust in God's assurances that He, quietly but effectually, will bring good for us and for others out of every disheartening disappointment, out of all painful toil and suffering. B.

"What doest thou here?" To every human being this question must be suggested, "Why am I doing what I do, thinking what I think, seeing what I see?" Work and recreation are equally legitimate, if each is treated as part of the will of God. There may be very good reasons for spending portions of our life on Horeb as well as upon Carmel, but the essential point

is, that we should be where we are, that we should be doing what we do, because, so far as we know, He who has given us the gift of life wills this, wills nothing else respecting us. *Liddon*.—Emphatically to the spiritually idle, world-busy, but soul-careless, God's question comes sharply home, *What doest thou here?* All doing is worse than useless that bears not wisely and savingly upon the soul's supreme relation to God. For the *end* of such doing is utter failure and eternal loss. Therefore, with His question, hear also His loving command, "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard." B.

Throughout the whole history of Elijah we see a striking harmony of the highest miraculous with the simplicity and truthfulness of the ordinary life. What a charm they have for us, and, at the same time, how morally impressive these life-like pictures of the ancient Israel! The prophet's sojourn "by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan," his journey to "Sarepta, a city which is near unto Sidon," the widow's unailing cruse of oil, long since passed into a proverbial saying to denote the unailing providence of God, that graphic scene where Elijah sends his servant to watch from the top of Carmel the signals of the coming rain, the repose under the juniper-tree, the heaven-provided sustenance, the Lord's talking with the prophet at the cave in Horeb, the familiar yet startling question, "Where art thou, Elijah?" how life-like is it all! how truth-like in the midst of the most astoundingly marvellous, how minute in circumstantial fact, and yet, with no loss of dignity, no abatement of ever-thrilling awe! And then, that pure religious teaching present in every act! it is this that gives it such a moral consistency, taking away its incredibility, and making it so unlike the *unmeaning* and impure wonders of a false religion.

Thus, especially, does that most remarkable scene in Horeb rise to the very height of the natural as well as the sublime. It is just what we are led to expect—Deity so holding converse with His faithful servant, the ever-present One thus talking in the solitude of nature to the man who, for His sake and for His worship's sake, had fled from the world! If it is not so with us in our own personal experience, we cannot help feeling that there must be a lack of that religious intercourse, that personal nearness to God, which would make it seem as probable as it is in itself both rational and true. But how easy, we may say, are such associations of thought and feeling in connection with these striking narratives. The two depart-

ments of the world seem to blend together. In its association with the deeply and fearfully religious, the natural acquires a new dignity ; it seems to rise up into the region of the supernatural. On the awful summit of Horeb nature becomes Divine ; and we can hardly tell which has most to impress the soul—the “ fire, the wind, the earthquake,” or the still small voice that attests the near presence of the higher power. We are lifted up to a plane of thought where much becomes credible that would altogether transcend belief if viewed from the lower horizon of the soul. It is just because the constant reading of the Scriptures produces this elevation of thought, that its miraculous retains that hold upon the Christian faith which the sceptic cannot understand.

T. Lewis.

## Section 12.

### AHAB'S DOUBLE VICTORY OVER BENHADAD OF SYRIA, THROUGH DIVINE COUNSEL AND HELP. HIS DISOBEDIENCE DENOUNCED AND ADJUDGED BY JEHOVAH.

1 KINGS 20 : 1-48.

1 AND Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together : and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses and chariots : and he went up and besieged Samaria, and 2 fought against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel, into the city, and said 3 unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine ; thy wives also and thy 4 children, even the goodliest, are mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, It is accord- 5 ing to thy saying, my lord, O king ; I am thine, and all that I have. And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, I sent indeed unto thee, saying, 6 Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children ; but I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants ; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they 7 shall put it in their hand, and take it away. Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief : for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold ; and I denied him not. And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken thou not, neither 8 consent. Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do : but this thing I may not do. 9 10 And the messengers departed, and brought him word again. And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for 11 handfuls for all the people that follow me. And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell 12 him, Let not him that girdeth on *his armour* boast himself as he that putteth it off. And it came to pass, when *Ben-hadad* heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings, in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set *yourselves in array*. And they set *themselves* 13 *in array* against the city. And, behold, a prophet came near unto Ahab king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it 14 into thine hand this day ; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, By the young men of the princes of the provinces. 15 Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And he answered, Thou. Then he mustered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two : and after them he mustered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand. 16 And they went out at noon. But Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he 17 and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first ; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There 18 are men come out from Samaria. And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take 19 them alive ; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive. So these went out of the city, the young men of the princes of the provinces, and the army which followed them.

20 And they slew every one his man ; and the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them : and Ben-  
 21 hadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with horsemen. And the king of Israel went  
 22 out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter. And  
 the prophet came near to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and  
 mark, and see what thou doest : for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up  
 against thee.

23 And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their god is a god of the hills ; there-  
 fore they were stronger than we : but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we  
 24 shall be stronger than they. And do this thing ; take the kings away, every man out of his  
 25 place, and put captains in their room : and number thee an army, like the army that thou hast  
 lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot : and we will fight against them in the plain, and  
 26 surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. And  
 it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad mustered the Syrians, and went up  
 27 to Aphek, to fight against Israel. And the children of Israel were mustered, and were victu-  
 alled, and went against them : and the children of Israel encamped before them like two  
 28 little flocks of kids ; but the Syrians filled the country. And a man of God came near and  
 spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said,  
 The LORD is a god of the hills, but he is not a god of the valleys ; therefore will I deliver all  
 29 this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. And they  
 encamped one over against the other seven days. And so it was, that in the seventh day the  
 battle was joined ; and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand foot-  
 30 men in one day. But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city ; and the wall fell upon twenty and  
 seven thousand men that were left. And Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an  
 31 inner chamber. And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings  
 of the house of Israel are merciful kings : let us, we pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins,  
 and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel : peradventure he will save thy  
 32 life. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the  
 king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said,  
 33 Is he yet alive? he is my brother. Now the men observed diligently, and hastened to catch  
 whether it were his mind ; and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye,  
 bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him ; and he caused him to come up into the  
 34 chariot. And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities which my father took from thy father I  
 will restore ; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Sama-  
 ria. And I, said Ahab, will let thee go with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him,  
 and let him go.

35 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his fellow by the word of the  
 36 LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. Then said he unto him,  
 Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed  
 from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him,  
 37 and slew him. Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man  
 38 smote him, smiting and wounding him. So the prophet departed, and waited for the king  
 39 by the way, and disguised himself with his headband over his eyes. And as the king passed  
 by, he cried unto the king : and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle ;  
 and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man : if by  
 any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of  
 40 silver. And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel  
 41 said unto him, So shall thy judgment be ; thyself hast decided it. And he hastened, and took  
 the headband away from his eyes ; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the  
 42 prophets. And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy  
 hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and  
 43 thy people for his people. And the king of Israel went to his house heavy and displeased,  
 and came to Samaria.

**1-43.** *The invasions of Israel by the Syrians and their results.* The insertion of this chapter, which contains an account of two invasions of Israel by the hosts of Syria and of the utter

defeat of the latter, constitutes a break in the history of Elijah, which has occupied the historian up to the end of chap. 19, and which is resumed with chap. 21. The insertion of this



twentieth chapter in this place is apparently due to the compiler of these records, who seems to have adopted this arrangement as the more chronological. *Hammond.*

This chapter contains the history of two invasions of the kingdom of Ahab by Benhadad, king of Syria, and of his defeat on both occasions by the Israelites under the special intervention of the Lord, who, grievously as He had been offended, still has pity for the seed of Abraham, will try them longer yet, and will not yet give them over to utter misery and ruin. He, therefore, unasked, interferes by His prophets, and encourages the king and people by exhortations and promises. We hear nothing of Baal in these transactions. Their holiday god was of no use to them in time of trouble; and Ahab himself had of late seen too many proofs of the Lord's power, not to know that whatever He promised He was able to perform, and to follow in a spirit of becoming submission the instructions he received. Still there is throughout the narrative a sort of cheerlessness, arising from the want of that spontaneous reference to the Lord and thankfulness to Him, which plays like a sunbeam over the history of public transactions of equal or even lesser moment in the time of devout kings. *Kitto.*—This chapter proclaims that neither any people nor its rulers can forget God with impunity; that disregard of His laws is sure to bring down His judgments; that the purgatory of nations is in this life present; that while the individual awaits a judgment to come, the community is judged now, by sword and famine and pestilence; by invasion and defeat; by loss of fame and territory; by bad harvests and crippled trade. Corporate bodies and communities may "have no conscience," but they will prove sooner or later, as Assyria and Babylon, as Medes and Persians, as Greeks and Romans, as Russia and Turkey have proved, that "verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. 58:11). *Hammond.*

**13.** The Israelites had their directions from an inspired prophet, one of the prophets of the Lord whom Ahab had hated and persecuted: *And behold, a prophet, even one, drew near to the king of Israel;* so it may be read. Behold and wonder, that God should send a prophet with a kind and gracious message to so wicked a prince as Ahab was; but he did it, 1. For his people Israel's sake, who, though wickedly degenerated, were the seed of Abraham his friend and Jacob his chosen, the children of the covenant and not yet cast off. 2. That He

might magnify His mercy in doing good to one so evil and unthankful; might either bring him to repentance or leave him the more inexcusable. 3. That He might mortify the pride of Benhadad and check his insolence; Ahab's idolatry shall be punished hereafter, but Benhadad's haughtiness shall be chastised now. H.

For years past the prophets have been proscribed, hunted, harried to death. Yet in his darkest hour, when other refuge fails him, Ahab finds a prophet at his side. God bears no grudges. It is sufficient to give us a claim upon His help that we are helpless. "Who can wonder enough at this unweariable mercy of God? After the fire and rain fetched miraculously from heaven, Ahab had promised much, performed nothing, yet God will again bless and solicit him with victory; one of those prophets whom he persecuted shall comfort his dejection with the news of deliverance and triumph." This act of grace should have proved that the Lord was God, and that the prophet was His messenger. It is not in man to act thus. "*Thou shalt know that I am the Lord.*" "Not for thy righteousness or the uprightness of thine heart dost thou go in to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations," etc. (De. 9:4, 5). The drought, the fire, the great rain, none of these had convinced the king and queen. Will deliverance from the jaws of death move them? Will they believe in a God of battles? Will they recognize His finger in a superhuman victory? *Hammond.*

The persevering condescension and forbearance of God toward Ahab are truly marvellous, and all for the purpose of causing him to know that the God of Israel was indeed the true God, or Jehovah. It all proved to him but the savor of death unto death; and the signal victory but aggravated the condemnation of him who still persisted in his wickedness. T. C.

**16-20.** The Syrian king was still at his cups, when the watchmen reported that men were coming out of the city; on which, with quiet indifference, which seems characteristic of his arrogant temper, or might be the effect of his wine, he simply directed that they should be taken alive, whether they came for peace or for war. He probably wished to learn from them the state of the city and the intentions of Ahab; but the direction, given without any questions as to their numbers, indicates the most sovereign indifference to any force that Samaria could set forth. The young men had no mind to be taken. On the contrary, they smote right and left, and presently laid pros-

trate those who had stood against them. This, with the sight of the seven thousand behind coming out of the gates to take part in the fray, struck the Syrian host with a sudden panic, and they fled with all their might, the arrogant king himself being not the hindmost, for he hastened away on a fleet horse. This was the Lord's doing; but we do not hear of any thanksgiving or sacrifices offered to Him in gratitude for help to which they had such little claim. *Kitto*.

**22.** I hear not of either the public thanksgiving or amendment of Ahab. Neither danger nor victory can change him from himself. Benhadad and he, though enemies, agree in unrepentance; the one is no more moved with mercy than the other with judgment. Neither is God any changeling in His proceedings toward both. His judgment shall still follow the Syrian; His mercy, Israel: mercy both in forewarning and redelivering Ahab; judgment in overthrowing Benhadad. The prophet of God comes again, and both foretells the intended encounter of the Syrian and advises the care and preparation of Israel; "Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest; for, at the return of the year, the king of Syria will come up against thee." God purposeth the deliverance of Israel; yet may not they neglect their fortifications. The merciful intentions of God toward them may not make them careless. The industry and courage of the Israelites fall within the decree of their victory. *Bp. H.*

**34.** Benhadad, full of gratitude at this wholly unexpected leniency, suggested the terms he was willing to offer as the price of his freedom. He would restore the frontier towns taken from Omri by his father, Benhadad I., thus disabling himself from future invasion by the same route, and would grant Ahab the privilege his father had enjoyed in Samaria, of building streets and squares in his capital of Damascus, for his commercial and political convenience (verses 33, 34). Ahab, elated by this unlooked-for change of fortune, rashly accepted the terms, and permitted the departure of his royal prisoner without requiring any pledge of the fulfilment of his engagement. Such an act was a gross political blunder no less than a heinous theocratical offence. The enemy of Jehovah had been delivered into his hand under His curse (verse 42). To let him go was to be unfaithful to the commission under which he reigned. *Anon*.

It was not clemency, it was culpable weakness to send this overbearing despot, who had

already cost Israel so dear, to send him to his home, there to renew his plots against the people of God. As well might the magistrate compassionate the burglar or the garotter, and instead of shutting him up in prison, send him into the streets to be the plague of society. The king, like the magistrate, is trustee for the commonwealth. He has no right to gratify his benevolent instincts at the expense of the community. Still less right had the theocratic king, the representative of Heaven, to liberate a tyrant whom God had manifestly given into his hands. "Charity cannot excuse disobedience." He had proved Benhadad twice, yet he asks for no material guarantees. He neither consults nor remembers his deliverer. *Hammond*.

**35.** Blasphemy hath escaped too well. Ahab hath at once peace with Benhadad, war with God. God proclaims it by His herald, one of the sons of the prophets; not yet in His own form, but disguised, both in fashion and complaint. *Bp. H.*—The wounding, we may be quite sure, and the tragical circumstances connected therewith, are essential parts of the parable this prophet had to act, of the lesson he had to teach. Now the great lesson he had to convey, not to the king alone, but to the prophetic order and to the whole country, the lesson most necessary in that lawless age, was that of *implicit, unquestioning obedience* to the Divine law. Ahab had just transgressed that law. He had "let go a man whom God had appointed to utter destruction;" he had heaped honors on the oppressor of his country, and in gratifying benevolent impulses had ignored the will and counsel of God. No doubt it seemed to him, as it has seemed to others since, that he had acted with rare magnanimity, and that his generosity in that age, an age which showed no mercy to the fallen, was unexampled. But he must be taught that he has no right to be generous at the expense of others; that God's will must be done. He is taught this by the prophetic word (verse 42), but much more effectively by the actions which preceded it. A prophet required to smite a brother prophet, and that for no apparent reason, would no doubt find it repugnant to his feelings to do so. But the prophet who refused to do this, who followed his benevolent impulses in preference to the word of the Lord, died for his sin—died by the visitation of God. What a lesson was this to king and prophets and people! *Hammond*.

**42. Therefore thy life shall go for his.** If it be asked, Wherein lay Ahab's great

offence, for which God threatens to punish him so severely? the answer is, That it consisted in suffering so horrid a blasphemer as Benhadad was to go unpunished, which was contrary to an express law (Lev. 24 : 16), that extended not to those only that were born in the land, but to strangers likewise. God had delivered him into Ahab's hands for his blasphemy, as he had promised (verse 28), and therefore this act of Providence, compared with the law, did plainly intimate that he was appointed by God for destruction ; but so far was Ahab from punishing him as he deserved that he treats him like a friend and a brother, dismisses him upon easy terms, and takes his bare word for the performance, without the least care for the reparation of God's honor. *Stackhouse.*

It corresponds to the case of Agag, whom Saul spared, but whom Samuel slew. The Lord had appointed this man to "utter destruction ;" and Ahab knew it. He was to be taught to know, in avenging justice, the greatness of that God he had blasphemed ; and the power of the state he ruled was to be so broken as to render it incapable of giving further trouble to Israel. All these public duties Ahab had neglected to gratify a private sentiment ; and doubtless from a sympathy with idolatry, which it ill became a king of Israel to show. It was in this that he offended ; and his offence was great. To view it rightly, we must look to the misery thereafter caused Israel by the very power which he threw away this opportunity of rendering harmless ; and with peculiar intensity must we regard the fact that a few years after Ahab met his death in battle with the very king he thus befriended, and under the orders of that king to his soldiers to aim their weapons exclusively against the life of the man who had spared his own. *Kitto.*

It is to be remembered, first, that Ahab was not free to do as he liked in this matter. His victories had been won, not by his prowess, by the skill of his generals or the valor of his soldiers, but by the power of God alone. The war was God's war ; it was begun and continued, and should therefore have been ended, in Him. When even the details of the attack had been ordered of God (verse 14), surely He should have been consulted as to the disposal of the prisoners. But Ahab, who had himself played so craven a part (verses 21, 31), and had contributed nothing to these great and unhopèd-for victories, nevertheless arrogated to himself their fruits, and thereby ignored and dishonored God. Secondly, if he had so little regard for his own private interests as to liberate such

a man as Benhadad, he ought, as trustee for the peace and welfare of Israel, to have acted differently. The demand of verse 6 should have revealed to him the character of the man he had to deal with. And lastly, he was acting in defiance of all the principles and precedents of the Old Testament dispensation. The king was the authorized dispenser of rewards and punishments, not only to wicked subjects but to aggressive nations. It was his duty to mete out to them the measure they had served to Israel. And the precedents were all in favor of putting such wretches as this Benhadad to the sword (Josh. 10 : 26 ; Judges 7 : 25 ; 1 Sam. 15 : 33). If he had been the first oppressor who fell into the hands of Israel, Ahab might have had some excuse. But with the fate of Agag, of Adonibezek, of Oreb and Zeeb, in his memory, he ought at any rate to have paused and asked counsel of God before taking Benhadad into his chariot and sending him away with a covenant of peace, to reappear at no distant period on the scene as the scourge of the Lord's people. *Hammond.*

A personal fact is not indistinctly suggested by the allegory of the prophet. The soul's life is the forfeit of its neglect of an offered salvation through life-long absorption in this and that object of desire and pursuit. That is all. Busy—busy—busy—here and there ! That is the epitaph of many a lost soul ! Busy here and there, and the *life* entrusted to me, the life upon which my life was staked, gone—gone forever ! Busy, here and there, gathering, not wasting, using, not abusing mental gifts, business talents, mechanical skill, mother-love, graceful accomplishments, learning, wealth, position and influence, yet the true life, to which all these gifts and gains are designed to be subsidiary and helpful, gone, escaped forever ! To this consciousness of life neglected, of Christ rejected, of an eternal future forgotten and disregarded, and to this experience, must come at length every living man, every living woman, who is busied life-long exclusively with these *best* concerns of earth. And when that consciousness and experience *are* realized at the judgment of the great day, the confirming voice of God's condemnation shall sound within the long-busy soul itself. "*Thyself hast decided it,*" was the self-condemning sentence of Ahab when the fiat of Jehovah had gone forth for his destruction. And thus self-adjudged and self-condemned shall be every world-busy but God-rejecting man ! B.

## Section 13.

AHAB AND NABOTH. SACRILEGIOUS MURDER BY JEZEBEL AND THE  
ELDERS OF JEZREEL.

1 KINGS 21 : 1-29.

1 AND it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which  
 2 was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth,  
 saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near  
 unto my house ; and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it : or, if it seem good to  
 3 thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid  
 4 it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. And Ahab came into his  
 house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to  
 him : for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him  
 5 down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. But Jezebel his wife  
 6 came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? And  
 he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy  
 vineyard for money ; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee *another* vineyard for it : and  
 7 he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost  
 thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry :  
 8 I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name,  
 and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were  
 9 in his city, *and* that dwelt with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a  
 10 fast, and set Naboth on high among the people : and set two men, sons of Belial, before him,  
 and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the king. And  
 11 then carry him out, and stone him, that he die. And the men of his city, even the elders  
 and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, according as it was  
 12 written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth  
 13 on high among the people. And the two men, sons of Belial, came in and sat before him :  
 and the men of Belial bare witness against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the  
 people, saying, Naboth did curse God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the  
 14 city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth  
 15 is stoned, and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned,  
 and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth  
 the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money : for Naboth is not alive, but dead.  
 16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down  
 to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it,  
 17, 18 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Arise, go down to meet  
 Ahab king of Israel, which dwelleth in Samaria : behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth,  
 19 whither he is gone down to take possession of it. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying,  
 Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? and thou shalt speak unto  
 him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall  
 20 dogs lick thy blood, even thine. And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine  
 enemy? And he answered, I have found thee : because thou hast sold thyself to do that  
 21 which is evil in the sight of the LORD. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will utterly  
 sweep thee away, and will cut off from Ahab every man child, and him that is shut up and  
 22 him that is left at large in Israel ; and I will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the  
 son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith  
 23 thou hast provoked me to anger, and hast made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spake the  
 24 LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel, by the rampart of Jezreel. Him that dieth of  
 Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat ; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air  
 25 eat. (But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to do that which was evil in  
 26 the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in  
 following idols, according to all that the Amorites did, whom the LORD cast out before the

27 children of Israel.) And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28, 29 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days : but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

THE impressions made upon Ahab and Israel at Carmel, God confirms by twice interposing in their behalf against the Syrian king Benhadad. Twice He secures overwhelming victories by Israel's small army over the vast hosts of Syria. In this He is still seeking to "turn their heart back again;" for He expressly declares, as the reason for His interposition, "that ye may know that I am the Lord" (1 K. 20 : 18, 28). (See previous Section.) But Ahab only abused the Divine forbearance and favor. In the very moment of complete success, like Saul with Agag, he openly disobeyed God's command to destroy Benhadad. He preferred and dared to gratify his royal vanity by accepting the professed submission of this Syrian king of kings with his people. So he spared Benhadad to become strong again, and a few years later to be God's instrument in his own destruction. "Because," God plainly told him then, "thou hast let go a man whom I had devoted to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life." It was during the interval of peace which followed the second victory that the incident now under review occurred. It seems to be recorded here to show how utterly hardened Ahab had become. From selfish vanity he had just spared an idolatrous king whom God had condemned. Now from a mere petty, selfish whim he suffers his wicked queen to destroy a righteous man, on account of that man's obedience to the law of God. B.

**1-13.** History tells of few crimes of its kind more flagitious, more cruel and cold-blooded than this. Here we see that spectacle which one of the ancients said was dear to the gods—a just man suffering shameful wrongs with dignity and patience: we see a man because of his fidelity to God and His law judicially done to death by the representative of God, by the authority appointed to execute the law. And just as the crime has few parallels, so has the history few equals in point of graphic force and quiet pathos. It is like one of those sketches by the hand of a master, which set us wondering to see how much effect can be produced, and how much meaning conveyed, by a few broad lines and touches. *Hammond.*

**1-3.** Adjoining the enclosure of Ahab's summer palace at Jezreel was a small vineyard owned by Naboth, that Ahab desired to ob-

tain. Naboth, who had held fast his integrity with Jehovah, declined to part with it because it was his patrimony. The law of God forbade any Israelite from alienating the inheritance of his father (Lev. 25 : 28). This was Naboth's only and sufficient reason—a conscientious one—for declining to gratify the king. B.

**Jezreel.** Ahab, not content with the palaces and pleasure grounds provided by his father in Samaria, fixed upon the town of Jezreel in Esdraelon for his residence, when his presence should not be demanded at the capital. Here he built him a palace; here he appears to have instituted the worship of Astarte—the chief goddess of Jezebel's countrymen, as Baal was their chief god—and here the four hundred priests of Astarte, or "the groves," ate at Jezebel's own table. The site of Jezreel is of great beauty and of commanding character. The town occupied the summit of a small isolated ridge which rises out of the plain about six miles north from Jenin, being a mile or so to the northwest of the foot of Mount Gilboa. Westwardly it overlooks the entire length of the plain to the head of Mount Carmel; eastwardly it commands the view of the valley of Jezreel toward the Jordan, and of the massive bulk of Gilead and Bashan rising beyond. The ridge is about one hundred feet high and is several hundred yards long. On the south it slopes gradually to the level of the plain; but in every other direction it falls off abruptly. Ahab's palace seems to have been built at the eastern extremity of the ridge, overhanging the town wall, and the coveted vineyard of the murdered Naboth lay just beneath the palace adjoining the wall. N. C. B. (See vol. iii., pp. 184, 351, 353.)

Of the once capital of Israel not a vestige remains, though the situation is lovely. The very ruins have crumbled from desolate heaps to flat turf-clad hillocks. Many old sarcophagi, or marble coffins, lay strewn about, some converted into horse-troughs, and several richly sculptured with the figures of the crescent moon, the symbol of Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians; but these are the only relics of the ancient beauty of Jezreel. Its situation explains why it was chosen as a royal residence. On the east side it has a defensible steep, rocky descent of at least one hundred feet, and from

its tower there is a commanding view north, east, and west. For miles the route from the Jordan by Bethshean can be traced. On the other side the plain is in view past Taanach and Megiddo, as far as Carmel. The importance of Jezreel was limited to the reigns of Ahab and his son. Ahab selected it as his favorite residence, without deserting altogether Samaria as the political capital. Here he erected his palace and built his "ivory house," its inner walls, probably, panelled or veneered with ivory; and here Jezebel lived after his death. The sad story of Naboth is forcibly brought before our mind as we stand on the mounds of Jezreel. The royal grounds most probably have stretched down the hill. Then to the east is the little valley, where was the plot, the patrimony of Naboth, on the way up to the city. *Tristram*.

2. Ahab is lord and king of all the territories of Israel; Naboth is the owner of one poor vineyard: Ahab cannot enjoy Israel if Naboth enjoy his vineyard. Besides Samaria, Ahab was the victor of him that was attended with two and thirty kings; Naboth was a plain townsman of Jezreel, the good husband of a little vineyard. Whether is the wealthier? I do not hear Naboth wish for anything of Ahab's; I hear Ahab wishing, not without indignation for a repulse, for somewhat from Naboth. Riches and poverty are no more in the heart than in the hand. He is wealthy that is contented; he is poor that wanteth more. O rich Naboth, that carest not for all the large possessions of Ahab; so thou mayest be the lord of thine own vineyard. O miserable Ahab, that carest not for thine own possessions whilst thou mayest not be the lord of Naboth's vineyard! *Bp. H.*

As the law was concerned for the continued existence of families, so, too, provision was made for the *preservation of the property* on which the subsistence of the family depended. As far as possible, the inheritance was to be preserved entire. Here the *theocratic principle* in its full force came in, and its application to questions of proprietorship is expressed in the declaration (*Lev. 25: 23*), "The land is mine; for ye are strangers and foreigners with me"—that is, God, the King of the people, is the real proprietor of the land, and He gives it to the people only as tenants. Now, inasmuch as each family forms an integral part of the theocracy, an inheritance is given to it by Jehovah for its subsistence, which forms, as it were, an hereditary feudal holding, and is therefore in itself inalienable. Hence Naboth's refusal; and

hence the strong language of the prophets against the efforts of the rich to enlarge their possessions by adding to their own lands the inheritance of others (*Isa. 5: 8* and other passages). O.

4-7. *Ahab as a sufferer and Jezebel a comforter.* We have had the one weakness of Elijah's life. Here we have the one weakness of Ahab's whole career. As is the cause so is the effect, pitifully trivial and childish. This king over Israel, possessing two luxurious palaces and all the pleasures that unlimited wealth and power could command, is actually sickened with displeasure and discontent because he cannot obtain this toy garden for his gratification. So it is that something is always wanting to those who have most. And one trivial want is stronger than the many possessions. One small cross of want or disappointment brings more of real pain than many blessings give of pleasure. Now Jezebel comes in as a comforter, faithful in her devotion to *him* if in nothing else. Like a child he tells her the cause of his trouble. But he conceals and misrepresents Naboth's reason for declining. He implies that the refusal came from mere obstinacy and a desire to thwart his wishes. Whereas Naboth had put it on the high ground of obedience to Jehovah's express law. And Ahab, as himself solemnly pledged to maintain this law, was bound to respect and yield to Naboth's reason. What the subject could not conscientiously concede the sovereign could not rightly require. As he acts and speaks childishly, so Jezebel soothingly answers as to a child. "Cheer up! Thou art yet king. I will get you what you are longing for!" She does not tell him her plan, for *he* has yet some *fear* of God, if not conscience, left, or he would have at once seized upon Naboth's land. She would not awaken this fear, and perhaps hinder her scheme, by acquainting him with it. And as he lies there in peevish discontent he has not fear or conscience enough to care what course she intends to pursue. B.

As he lies there like a spoiled child, all because he could not get his own way, he may serve for an example of the misery of unbridled selfishness and unregulated desires. An acre or two of land was a small matter to get into such a state about, and there are few things that are worth a wise or a strong man's being so troubled. Hezekiah might "turn his face to the wall" in the extremity of sickness and earnestness of prayer; but Ahab, doing it, is only a poor, feeble creature who has weakly set his heart on what is not his, and weakly

whimpers because he cannot have it. To be thus at the mercy of our own ravenous desires, and so utterly miserable when they are thwarted, is unworthy of manhood, and is sure to bring many a bitter moment; for there are more disappointments than gratifications in store for such a one. We may learn from him, too, the certainty that weakness will darken into wickedness. Such a mood as his always brings some Jezebel or other to suggest evil ways of succeeding. In this wicked world there are more temptations to sin than helps to virtue, and the weak man will soon fall into some of the abundant traps laid for him. A. M.

Discontent is a sin that is its own punishment, and makes men torment themselves; it makes the spirit sad, the body sick, and all the enjoyments sour; it is the heaviness of the heart and the rottenness of the bones. It is a sin that is its own parent; it arises not from the condition but from the mind; as we find Paul contented in a prison, so Ahab discontented in a palace; he had all the delights of Canaan at command, the wealth of a kingdom, the pleasures of a court, and the honors and powers of a throne; and yet *all this avails him nothing* without Naboth's vineyard. Inordinate desires expose men to continual vexations, and they that are disposed to fret, be they never so happy, will always find something or other to fret at. H.

**7. I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth.** Ahab wanted neither wit nor wickedness; yet is he in both a very novice to this Zidonian dame. There needs no other devil than Jezebel, whether to project evil or to work it. *Bp. H.*—How she would give it him she did not indicate. Nor was Ahab careful to inquire, lest he should be forced either to sanction what his conscience condemned or to forbid what he would fain see done with no open complicity on his part. It presents a frightful picture of the demoralization of the people of Jezreel, caused by the residence of the idolatrous and wicked court, that her horrible plot was so readily carried into effect. *Venables.*

**8-10. Jezebel's impious scheme to put Naboth out of the way.** The alphabet and the use of letters came from her own country of Phœnicia. She employs this, to her familiar, agency to issue in the king's name and with his seal a command to the elders and nobles of Jezreel. And never was a more impious mandate issued. It was not merely an order causelessly and remorselessly to murder a righteous man; but it proposed to commit such murder *under the*

*color of a religious service, and with the forms of justice.* The rulers of Jezreel were directed to *proclaim a fast*, a solemn, religious observance, as if some public calamity were threatened on account of some great crime. Thus the people were prepared to expect some accusation to be made, to look for some criminal to be pointed out. And they would be ready to take instant action in judgment against such alleged criminal, that the threatened calamity might be avoided. Thus the sacred offices of religion would be perverted to serve Jezebel's murderous purpose. Further, she directs these men, who were the magistrates of Jezreel, to employ the forms of justice while directly violating its spirit and subverting its ends. She requires the men who constitute the court of God's appointment, to whom He had entrusted the administration of law and equity, *themselves to suborn false witnesses.* Nay, she frames the false charge, and requires these judges to put the very words of accusation into the mouths of the bribed accusers. And as the crowning feature of her unparalleled iniquity, all that she proposes to be done is based upon an assumed recognition of Jehovah as the God of Israel, and a regard for His religious ordinances and civil statutes. Because this will best subserve her cruel purpose, she makes pretence of acknowledging Him, for whose authority and laws and servants she has hitherto manifested only scorn and hate. B.

Jezebel had Ahab's signet, the badge of authority. Her letter to the elders of Jezreel speaks out with cynical disregard of decency the whole ugly conspiracy. It is direct, horribly plain and imperative. There is a perfect nest of sins hissing and coiled together in it—hypocrisy calling religion in to attest a lie, subornation of evidence, contempt for the poor tools who are to perjure themselves, consciousness that such work will only be done by worthless men, cool lying, ferocity and murder—these are a pretty company to crowd into half a dozen lines. Most detestable of all is the plain speaking which shows her hardened audacity and conscious defiance of all right. To name sin by its true name, and then to do it without a quiver, is a depth of evil reached by few men, and perhaps fewer women. A. M.—Mark the atrocious use to which a bad heart puts the knowledge of God's law. Jezebel, as this record shows, was acquainted with the requirements of the Mosaic code. She knew that blasphemy was punishable with death, and that at the mouth of two or three witnesses only could any one be condemned; and she availed

herself of that knowledge for bringing about falsely, yet under color of observing the law, the death of Naboth. *W. M. Taylor.*

**11-14.** *The elders and nobles execute Jezebel's scheme to the letter.* Without demur or hesitation, having no fear of God to counteract their fear of Jezebel, as residents of the royal city steeped in the iniquity of the court, they promptly carry out the very minute directions given them. They convene a religious assembly, and transform it into a court. They set Naboth in a conspicuous place. By the lips of false witnesses, whom *they* have procured and instructed how to speak, they hurl upon the righteous but defenceless man a double accusation of the highest crime—*blasphemy against God and treason against the king.* Then, without allowing the accused man a moment of opportunity for answer or disproof, they pronounce judgment of death. And instantly the assembled multitude carried the innocent but condemned Naboth forth out of the city, and executed sentence according to the law of Moses by stoning him to death. And the message sent to Jezebel accords with the character of the whole transaction. They said, not that Naboth was found guilty of crime against God and the king and has been punished, but simply *Naboth is stoned, and is dead.* Surely never were cruel, heartless orders more heartlessly obeyed. B.

In the record of Jezebel not one redeeming feature anywhere appears. Her character bears the stamp of unmixed wickedness—pure and utter depravity. We should think much better of her if she had hired an assassin to waylay Naboth and hurl a javelin through his heart. It was doubly horrible to prostitute the sacred forms of justice to the purposes of such foul murder and wrong. Perhaps she thought to conceal crime under such a covering; but God abhors such concealments, and has ways to blast such schemes. All in all, the character of Jezebel is drawn—to be execrated. There could be no other worthy object in delineating such ineffable meanness and wickedness. H. C.

No clause of the letter is not observed. A fast is warned; the city is assembled; Naboth is convened, accused, confronted, sentenced, stoned: his vineyard is escheated to the crown; Ahab takes speedy and quiet possession. How still doth God sit in heaven, and look upon the plots of treachery and villainies as if they did not concern Him! The success so answers their desires, as if both heaven and earth were their friends. It is the plague, which seems

the felicity of sinners, to speed well in their lewd enterprises. No reckoning is brought in the midst of the meal: the end pays for all. *Bp. H.*

**15, 16.** Jezebel tells Ahab to take possession of the coveted vineyard, for Naboth is dead. As Naboth's sons had also been slain (2 K. 9:26), the king had now a legal claim to the possession. At once he goes to the vineyard, himself conscious of bloodguiltiness, although he had no direct part in the murder. But well he knew that Naboth's death had been designed and wrought by Jezebel, and that at heart he had been consenting to the deed. B.

Her indecent triumph at the success of the plot and her utter callousness are expressed in her words to Ahab, in which the main point is the taking possession of the vineyard. The death of its owner is told with exultation, as nothing but the sweeping away of an obstacle. Ahab asks no questions as to how this opportune clearing away of hindrance came about. He knew, no doubt, well enough, that there had been foul play; but that does not matter to him, and such a trifle as murder does not slacken his glad haste to get his new toy. There was other red on the vines than their clustering grapes, as he soon found out, when Elijah's grim figure, like an embodied conscience, met him there. Whoever reaches out to grasp a fancied good by breaking God's law may get his good, but he will get more than he expected along with it—even an accusing voice that prophesies evil. A. M.

Ahab's entry on the possession seems to have been made the very next day after Naboth's death. We learn afterward (2 K. 9:26) that Jehu and Bidkar rode with Ahab at the time, and so appalling was the curse which Elijah pronounced on the wretched king that it was imprinted on Jehu's memory, and he could quote it many years afterward, apparently in its very words. *Lumby.*

**17-20.** In the vineyard he encounters Elijah again, whom God had sent to meet him there. He learns from the prophet's words at what fatal cost to himself, to Jezebel, and to his children, this possession has been gained. Elijah's words are words of doom. In due time they are fulfilled: first, in his own death from a bow "drawn at a venture;" afterward, in the horrible mangling of Jezebel, and the slaughter of his seventy sons. B.

While Ahab is rejoicing in his new garden plot, and promising himself contentment in this commodious enlargement, in comes Elijah—sent from God with an errand of vengeance.



Little pleasure took he in his prospect while it was clogged with such a guest ; yet his tongue begins first, " Hast thou found me, O mine enemy ?" Great is the power of conscience. Upon the last meeting, for aught we know, Ahab and Elijah parted friends : the prophet had lackeyed his coach, and took a peaceable leave at this town's end ; now Ahab's heart told him that God and His prophet were fallen out with him. His continuing idolatry, now seconded with blood, bids him look for nothing but frowns from heaven. A guilty heart can never be at peace. *Bp. H.*

We see here this broad principle—pleasure won by sin is peace lost. While sin is yet tempting us it is loved ; when sin is done, it is loathed. Naboth's blood stains the leaves of Naboth's garden. Elijah is always waiting at the gate of the ill-gotten possession. Sin is blind to its true friends and its real foes. Elijah was the best friend Ahab had in the kingdom. Jezebel was the worst tempter that hell could have sent him. This is one of the certainest workings of evil desires in our own spirits, that they pervert to us all the relations of things, that they make us blind to all the moral truths of God's universe. Sin is blind as to itself, blind as to its own consequences, blind as to who are its friends and who are its foes, blind as to earth, blind as to another world, blind as to God. The man that walks in the " vain show" of transgression, whose heart is set upon evil, fancies that ashes are bread and stones gold (as in the old fairy story) ; and, on the other hand, he thinks that the true sweet is the bitter, and turns away from God's angels and God's prophets with, " Hast thou found me, O mine enemy ?" That is the reason of not a little of the infidelity that haunts this world—that sin, perverted and blinded, stumbles about in its darkness, and mistakes the face of the friend for the face of the foe. God sends in His mercy the discipline of life, pains and sorrows, to draw us away from the wrong, to make us believe that the right in this world and the next is life, and that holiness is happiness forevermore. And then, when, having done wrong, God's merciful messenger of a sharp sorrow finds us out, we say, " Hast thou found me, O mine enemy ?" and begin to wonder about the mysteries of Providence, and how it comes that there is evil in the creation of a good God. Why, physical evil is the best friend of the man that is subject to moral evil. Sorrow is the truest blessing to a sinner. The best thing that can befall any of us is that God shall not let us alone in

any wrong course without making us feel His rod, without hedging up our way with thorns, and sending us by His grace into a better one. There is no mystery in sorrow. There is a mystery in sin ; but sorrow, following on the back of sin, is the true friend, and not the enemy of the wrong-doing spirit. *A. M.*

**Thou hast sold thyself to work evil.** Because he was the king, the judge, who, instead of punishing the evil-doer, sanctioned and approved the deed, and who crowned a reign of idolatries and abominations with this shameful murder, the prophetic sentence is directed primarily against him. *Hammond.*—Not only had Ahab given himself entirely over to iniquity, but he had done so at the price of himself. The great German poet has elaborated this thought into that weird production wherein he represents his hero as selling his soul to the mocking Mephistopheles. And it were well that every evil-doer laid to heart the moral of his tragic tale. That which the sinner gives for his unhallowed pleasure or dishonest gain is himself. *W. M. Taylor.*

**21-25.** Elijah comes here and prophesies the fall of Ahab. The next peal, the next flash, fulfil the prediction. There, where he did the wrong, he died. In Jezreel, Ahab died. In Jezreel, Jezebel died. That plain was the battle-field for the subsequent discomfiture of Israel. Over and over again there encamped upon it the hosts of the spoilers. Over and over again its soil ran red with the blood of the children of Israel ; and at last, in the destruction of the kingdom, Naboth was avenged and God's word fulfilled. The threatened evil was foretold that it might lead the king to repentance, and that thus it might never need to be more than a threat. But, though Ahab was partially penitent and partially listened to the prophet's voice, yet for all that he went on in his evil way. Therefore the merciful threatening becomes a stern prophecy, and is fulfilled to the very letter. And so, when God's message comes to us, if we listen not to it and turn not to its gentle rebuke, oh, then we gather up for ourselves an awful futurity of judgment, when threatening darkens into punishment, and the voice that rebuked swells into the voice of final condemnation. There is a resurrection of acts as well as of bodies. Think what it will be for a man to sit surrounded by that ghastly company, the ghosts of his own sins !—and as each forgotten fault and buried badness comes, silent and sheeted, into that awful society, and sits itself down there, think of him greeting each with

the question, "Thou too? What! are ye all here? Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" and from each bloodless spectral lip there tolls out the answer, the knell of his life, "I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." A. M.

Altogether unnoticed by the world, many a man's sin meets him in that dread chamber of an awakened conscience, where so many sights and sounds of terror congregate. In solitude, in secret, in dead hours of night the sinner awakes, and the long train of his transgressions passes by before him. They mock him; they reproach him; they present themselves to him in all their hideous features, with no modest reserve, no fair sentences, no smooth names to name them by, that thus their wickedness may be concealed, but bold, brazen-faced, true to what they are. In such hours the sinner trembles. How bitterly does he reproach himself, bite his lips in the anguish of his spirit, and shut his eyes only that his sins, remembered now, may peer more closely in through the closed eyelids! It is Elijah meeting Ahab in Naboth's vineyard. It is the fulfilment of the words, "What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed, for the end of these things is death." The fact of this righteous judge and of this righteous judgment cannot be too deeply impressed upon us; and it is in no small degree for the sake of leaving that impression upon our minds that the story of Naboth is dwelt upon as it is.

**27-29.** The threatenings of the prophet so awfully announced, so powerfully brought home to Ahab on the very spot which had been the scene of his wickedness, produced its effect. Ahab himself repented, at least in part; and the last impression left upon us by the sacred writer, in bringing his terrible narrative regarding him to a close, is that even He whose judgments had followed him all his days has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live. His eye pitied the unhappy king as he "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly;" and the final motto of his melancholy story is, that, while he who dares to meet the Almighty as a foe can only perish upon the thick bosses of His buckler, he who repents and forsakes his sins shall find mercy. W. M.

Ahab put on the garb and guise of a penitent, and yet his heart was unhumiliated and unchanged. After this we find he hated a faithful prophet (chap. 22:8). It is no new

thing to find the show and profession of repentance where yet the truth and substance of it are wanting. Ahab's repentance was only what might be seen of men: *Seest thou* (says God to Elijah) *how Ahab humbles himself?* It was external only—the garments rent, but not the heart. A hypocrite may go very far in the outward performances of holy duties, and yet come short. He obtained hereby a reprieve, which I may call a kind of pardon. Though it was but an outside repentance (lamenting the judgment only and not the sin), though he did not leave his idols nor restore the vineyard to Naboth's heirs, yet because he did hereby give some glory to God, God took notice of it, and bade Elijah take notice of it; *Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself?* (verse 29). In consideration of this the threatened ruin of his house, which had not been fixed to any time, should be *adjourned to his son's days*. The sentence should not be revoked, but the execution suspended. Now, 1. This discovers the great goodness of God and His readiness to show mercy, which here *rejoices against judgment*. Favor is showed to this wicked man, that God might magnify His goodness (says Bishop Sanderson), even to the hazard of His other Divine perfections; as if (says he) God would be thought unholy, or untrue, or unjust (though He be none of these), or anything rather than unmerciful. 2. This teaches us to take notice of that which is good, even in those who are not so good as they should be; let it be commended as far as it goes. 3. This gives a reason why wicked people sometimes prosper long; God is rewarding their external services with external mercies. 4. This encourages all those that truly repent and unfeignedly believe the holy Gospel. If a pretending partial penitent shall go to His house reprieved, doubtless a sincere penitent shall *go to His house justified*. H.—But why, it may be asked, if Ahab's humiliation was so little worth, was any Divine regard shown toward it? This, we answer, was to show by a living example that self-condemnation and abasement before God is the way to escape His anger and obtain His favor. The exemption which the Lord made in Ahab's favor on his repenting was calculated to encourage him to aim at something better. Self-condemnation, self-abasement, and giving God the glory are the first steps from spiritual death to spiritual life. *Krummacher.*

If we were to seek the Scriptures through for a proof that God's "property is always to have mercy," and that judgment is His strange

work, where should we find a more striking and eminent one than in this relenting toward Ahab? *Hammond.*

*Other Suggestions of the Story.*

The key-note of Elijah's character is *force*—the force of righteousness. The New Testament, you remember, talks about the "power of Elias." The whole of his career is marked by this one thing—the strength of a righteous man. And, on the other hand, the key-note of Ahab's character is the weakness of wickedness and the wickedness of weakness. Weakly longing—as idle and weak minds in lofty places always do—after something that belongs to somebody else; with all his gardens, coveting the one little herb-plot of the poor Naboth; weak and worse than womanly, turning his face to the wall and weeping when he cannot get it; weakly desiring to have it, and yet not knowing how to set about accomplishing his wish; and then—as is always the case, for there are always tempters everywhere for weak people—that beautiful fiend by his side, like the other queen in our great drama, ready to screw the feeble man that she is wedded to, to the sticking place, and to dare anything to grasp that on which the heart was set. And so the deed is done: Naboth safe stoned out of the way; and Ahab goes down to take possession! The lesson of that is: Weak dallying with forbidden desires is sure to end in wicked clutching at them. A. M.

The *effect of selfish living*. It so weakens proper self-respect and self-reliance, that when disappointment comes, the man has nothing to fall back upon. So he belittles himself, as Ahab did, by childish fretting. True manhood and manly action have a basis of unselfishness. Devotion to others, to God or man, is the secret of self-reliance, patient endurance, and all other elements of truly elevated character.

The *amazing wickedness of the human heart*. To King Ahab were the words uttered: *Thou hast sold thyself to work evil*. Sold to Satan, only to receive the "wages of sin." In all history, sacred and secular, few parallels can be found to this utter depravity of Jezebel. Satan's power in her soul has rarely since been matched. B.—Jezebel is an instance of the fatal audacity with which a strong character may come, by long indulgence in self-willed gratification of its own desires, to trample down all obstacles and go crashing through all laws, human and Divine. The climax of sin is to see a deed to be sinful, and to do it all the

same. Such a pre-eminence in evil is not reached at a bound, but it can be reached; and every indulgence in passion and every gratifying of desire against which conscience protests is a step toward it. Therefore, if we shrink from such a goal, let us turn away from the paths that lead to it. "No mortal man is supremely foul all at once." Therefore resist the beginnings of evil. A. M.

Sin is not hateful to selfish repentance except that it brings self into trouble. That it offends a good God, grieves a compassionate God, that is nothing if it could be indulged without imperilling self. No wonder that selfish repentance is not saving. It might exist, does exist, to a degree now inconceivable to us, in hell. It may be very sincere on earth, but it is only another form of the sinful, selfish, corrupt nature. It is the human heart shrinking from suffering, but not yearning after God. Godly sorrow, on the other hand, eyes God mainly. That *He* should have been sinned against seems the terrible thing. That such love and goodness should have been despised and insulted seems intolerable. *J. Hall.*

The moral government of God to-day is administered on the same principles as those which we find underlying this narrative. True, the dishonest man now pursuing his purposes in secret may have no Elijah sent to him; but Elijah's God is living yet, and one has only to open his eyes and mark the progress of events from year to year to be convinced that "sorrow tracketh wrong as echo follows song—on, on, on." He who holds gain by injustice will, sooner or later, come to ruin; and, if no restitution is made, they who inherit from him his blood-stained gold will be made sharers of his calamity. Let a man rudely trample upon the weak, and take by violence that to which he has no right, and it will cost him much; for the judgment of God is already on the way to him, and though it tarry long, it will fall heavily when it comes. *W. M. Taylor.*

*Evil pursues sinners, and their sin is sure to find them out*. God sees the guilt. He sets the inward soul-avenger, conscience, on the track. And in His time He consummates the judgment, except the sinner has become penitent and trustful in His mercy. Save in that mercy there is no escape from ultimate and lasting doom.

The *principle involved in the Divine permission* of Naboth's slaughter by Jezebel is the same as that in all other martyrdoms. He was only one of the many worshippers of Jehovah she had caused to be slain. To meet the difficulty

in any one's thought, it is enough to say that the direct counteraction by God of the evil designs and deeds of men involves an utter change in His existing plan of government. An inspired explanation of this difficulty may be found in the seventy-third Psalm. B.

## Section 14.

### AHAB AND JEHOSEPHAT (OF JUDAH) DEFEATED BY BENHADAD, AND AHAB SLAIN.

1 KINGS 22 : 1-40.

22:1 AND they continued three years  
2 without war between Syria and Israel. And  
it came to pass in the third year, that Je-  
hoshaphat the king of Judah came down to  
3 the king of Israel. And the king of Israel  
said unto his servants, Know ye that Ra-  
moth-gilead is ours, and we be still, and take  
it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?  
4 And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou  
go with me to battle to Ramoth-gilead? And  
Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am  
as thou art, my people as thy people, my  
5 horses as thy horses. And Jehoshaphat said  
unto the king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee,  
6 at the word of the LORD to-day. Then the  
king of Israel gathered the prophets to-  
gether, about four hundred men, and said  
unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead  
to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said,  
Go up; for the LORD shall deliver it into  
7 the hand of the king. But Jehoshaphat said,  
Is there not here besides a prophet of the  
8 LORD, that we might inquire of him? And  
the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat,  
There is yet one man by whom we may in-  
quire of the LORD, Micaiah the son of Im-  
lah: but I hate him; for he doth not proph-  
esy good concerning me, but evil. And  
Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.  
9 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and  
said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Im-  
10 lah. Now the king of Israel and Jehosha-  
phat the king of Judah sat each on his  
throne, arrayed in their robes, in an open  
place at the entrance of the gate of Sama-  
ria; and all the prophets prophesied before  
11 them. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah  
made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith  
the LORD, With these shalt thou push the  
12 Syrians, until they be consumed. And all  
the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up  
to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the

2 CHRONICLES 18 : 1-34.

18:1 Now Jehoshaphat had riches and  
honour in abundance; and he joined affinity  
2 with Ahab. And after certain years he  
went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab  
killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance,  
and for the people that were with him, and  
moved him to go up *with him* to Ramoth-  
3 gilead. And Ahab king of Israel said unto  
Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go  
with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he an-  
swered him, I am as thou art, and my peo-  
ple as thy people; and *we will be* with thee  
4 in the war. And Jehoshaphat said unto the  
king of Israel, Inquire, I pray thee, at the  
5 word of the LORD to-day. Then the king  
of Israel gathered the prophets together,  
four hundred men, and said unto them,  
Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or  
shall I forbear? And they said, Go up;  
for God shall deliver it into the hand of the  
6 king. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not  
here besides a prophet of the LORD, that we  
might inquire of him? And the king of Is-  
rael said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one  
man by whom we may inquire of the LORD:  
but I hate him; for he never prophesied  
good concerning me, but always evil: the  
same is Micaiah the son of Imla. And Je-  
hoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.  
8 Then the king of Israel called an officer, and  
said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla.  
9 Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the  
king of Judah sat each on his throne, ar-  
rayed in their robes, and they sat in an open  
place at the entrance of the gate of Samaria;  
and all the prophets prophesied before them.  
10 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made  
him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the  
LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syr-  
ians, until they be consumed. And all the  
prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to  
Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD  
shall deliver it into the hand of the king.  
12 And the messenger that went to call Mi-  
caiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words  
of the prophets *declare* good to the king  
with one mouth: let thy word therefore, I  
pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak  
18 thou good. And Micaiah said, As the LORD  
liveth, what my God saith, that will I speak.  
14 And when he was come to the king, the king  
said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ra-  
moth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear?

LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the  
 13 king. And the messenger that went to call  
 Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold  
 now, the words of the prophets *declare* good  
 unto the king with one mouth : let thy  
 word, I pray thee, be like the word of one  
 14 of them, and speak thou good. And Mi-  
 caiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the  
 15 LORD saith unto me, that will I speak. And  
 when he was come to the king, the king said  
 unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-  
 gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he  
 answered him, Go up, and prosper ; and the  
 LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the  
 16 king. And the king said unto him, How  
 many times shall I adjure thee that thou  
 speak unto me nothing but the truth in the  
 17 name of the LORD? And he said, I saw all  
 Israel scattered upon the mountains, as  
 sheep that have no shepherd : and the LORD  
 said, These have no master ; let them return  
 18 every man to his house in peace. And the  
 king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not  
 tell thee that he would not prophesy good  
 19 concerning me, but evil? And he said,  
 Therefore hear thou the word of the LORD :  
 I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all  
 the host of heaven standing by him on his  
 20 right hand and on his left. And the LORD  
 said, Who shall entice Ahab, that he may  
 go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one  
 said on this manner ; and another said on  
 21 that manner. And there came forth a spirit,  
 and stood before the LORD, and said, I will  
 22 entice him. And the LORD said unto him,  
 Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth,  
 and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of  
 all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt  
 entice him, and shalt prevail also : go forth,  
 23 and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD  
 hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all  
 these thy prophets ; and the LORD hath spo-  
 24 ken evil concerning thee. Then Zedekiah  
 the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote  
 Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way  
 went the spirit of the LORD from me to  
 25 speak unto thee? And Micaiah said, Be-  
 hold, thou shalt see on that day, when thou  
 shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thy-  
 26 self. And the king of Israel said, Take  
 Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the  
 governor of the city, and to Joash the king's  
 27 son ; and say, Thus saith the king, Put this  
 fellow in the prison, and feed him with  
 bread of affliction and with water of afflic-  
 28 tion, until I come in peace. And Micaiah  
 said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD

And he said, Go ye up, and prosper ; and  
 15 they shall be delivered into your hand. And  
 the king said to him, How many times shall  
 I adjure thee that thou speak unto me noth-  
 ing but the truth in the name of the LORD?  
 16 And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon  
 the mountains, as sheep that have no shep-  
 herd : and the LORD said, These have no  
 master ; let them return every man to his  
 17 house in peace. And the king of Israel said  
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 would not prophesy good concerning me,  
 18 but evil? And he said, Therefore hear ye  
 the word of the LORD : I saw the LORD sit-  
 ting upon his throne, and all the host of  
 heaven standing on his right hand and on  
 19 his left. And the LORD said, Who shall en-  
 tice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up  
 and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake  
 saying after this manner, and another say-  
 20 ing after that manner. And there came  
 forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD,  
 and said, I will entice him. And the LORD  
 21 said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I  
 will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in  
 the mouth of all his prophets. And he said,  
 Thou shalt entice him, and shalt prevail  
 22 also : go forth, and do so. Now therefore,  
 behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in  
 the mouth of these thy prophets ; and the  
 LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee.  
 23 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came  
 near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek,  
 and said, Which way went the spirit of the  
 24 LORD from me to speak unto thee? And  
 Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that  
 day, when thou shalt go into an inner cham-  
 25 ber to hide thyself. And the king of Israel  
 said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back  
 unto Amon the governor of the city, and to  
 26 Joash the king's son ; and say, Thus saith  
 the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and  
 feed him with bread of affliction and with  
 water of affliction, until I return in peace.  
 27 And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in  
 peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me.  
 And he said, Hear, ye peoples, all of you.  
 28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat  
 the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-  
 29 gilead. And the king of Israel said unto  
 Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and go  
 into the battle ; but put thou on thy robes.  
 So the king of Israel disguised himself ; and  
 30 they went into the battle. Now the king  
 of Syria had commanded the captains of his  
 chariots, saying, Fight neither with small  
 nor great, save only with the king of Israel.  
 31 And it came to pass, when the captains of  
 the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they  
 said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they  
 turned about to fight against him : but Je-  
 hoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped  
 him ; and God moved them to depart from  
 32 him. And it came to pass, when the cap-  
 tains of the chariots saw that it was not the  
 king of Israel, that they turned back from  
 33 pursuing him. And a certain man drew  
 his bow at a venture, and smote the king of  
 Israel between the joints of the harness :  
 wherefore he said to the driver of the char-  
 iot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of  
 34 the host ; for I am sore wounded. And the

hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hear, ye peoples, all of you.

29 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

30 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and go into the battle ; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty and two captains of his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel ; and they turned aside to fight against him : and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. And a certain man drew his bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness : wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host ; for I am sore wounded. And the battle increased that day : and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even : and the blood ran out of the wound into the bottom of the chariot. And there went a cry throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his country. So the king died, and was brought to Samaria ; and they buried the king in Samaria. And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria ; and the dogs licked up his blood ; (now the harlots washed themselves *there* ;) according unto the word of the LORD which he spake. Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he built, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ? So Ahab slept with his fathers ; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

battle increased that day : howbeit the king of Israel stayed himself up in his chariot against the Syrians until the even : and about the time of the going down of the sun he died.

**I K. verses 1-40.** *The Death of Ahab and the Defeat of Israel.* This chapter is almost entirely occupied with an account of the death of Ahab, and of the circumstances which preceded and attended it. The earlier portion of the chapter, which contains the prophesyings of the false prophets and the vision of Micaiah, is only recorded because of its bearing on the death of the king, and the dispersion of his army. And the prominence accorded to Ahab's end only corresponds with the space assigned to his reign. That reign was so full of evil for Israel that it occupies a fourth part of this entire book. It was meet, therefore, that the death which avenged it should be recorded with proportionate detail. For the battle of Ramoth-Gilead was the final payment—so far as this world is concerned—for the sins of two and twenty years. And it is also to be considered here that Israel had gone hand in hand with him in his downward course. As the king's career had been one of steadily increasing demoralization, so had that of the people. The death of Naboth affords sufficient proof of this. The ready compliance of the elders, the alacrity with which they perpetrated that judicial murder, shows to what a moral depth the example of the court and the idolatry around them had plunged the holy nation. No ; king and queen had not sinned alone, and justice required they should not suffer alone. Nations and their rulers receive a reckoning in this life ;

how much more the *covenant* people and the *Lord's* anointed? Placed as they were under a direct law of *temporal* punishments and rewards, it would have been strange, indeed, if such a reign as this had gone unrecompensed. But, so far from that, they have already received part reckoning for their sin. The three years' drought, the famine, the terrible Syrian invasions, have avenged a part of their idolatries and immoralities ; but there still remains a long score of guilt to be expiated in shame and suffering and blood. And here it may be well to remind ourselves what were the sins which awaited a settlement under the walls of Ramoth-Gilead. They were five in number. (1) The calf-worship—the hereditary sin of the northern kingdom, the sin of Jeroboam ; (2) the worship of Baal, with the prostitution which accompanied it—the sin primarily of Jezebel and her Phœnician following, but shared in by almost the entire nation ; (3) the determined persecution of the prophets and the virtual proscription of the ancient faith ; (4) the release of the Syrian king, in disregard of God's will—the sin of Ahab and his captains ; and (5) the murder of Naboth in defiance of all law—the sin of the rulers and elders. *Hammond.*

We have, in the cuneiform annals of an Assyrian king, a very curious and valuable confirmation of the power of Damascus at this time—of its being under the rule of a monarch named Benhadad, who was at the head of a

great confederacy of princes, and who was able to bring into the field year after year vast armies, with which he repeatedly engaged the whole force of Assyria. We have accounts of three campaigns between the Assyrians on the one side, and the Syrians, Hittites, Hamathites, and Phoenicians, united under the command of Benhadad, upon the other, in which the contest is maintained with spirit, the armies being of a large size, and their composition and character such as we find described in Scripture. G. R.

**1, 2.** Though Ahab continued under guilt and wrath, and the dominion of the lusts to which he had sold himself, yet, as a reward for his professions of repentance and humiliation, though the time drew near when he should descend into battle and perish, yet we have him blessed with a three years' peace, and an honorable visit made him by Jehoshaphat king of Judah. H.

**2.** Here for the first time we find relations of alliance—political fraternity—between the usually rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The author of Chronicles indicates the particular form of this alliance; "Jehoshaphat joined affinity with Ahab," asking and taking Ahab's daughter for the wife of his son Jehoram, heir-apparent to his throne (2 Chron. 18:1 and 21:6). This affinity is the more astounding because Jehoshaphat was in the main a good man and a real reformer, while Ahab was wicked, and Jezebel notoriously and fearfully so. What Jehoshaphat's inducements were the record does not clearly indicate. The author of Chronicles puts things in this order: "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab." This author not seldom gives indications of a philosophic turn of mind; so that we probably do no violence to his words if we introduce the logical connective—"And *consequently*" joined affinity with Ahab. It would not be the first or the last time in which riches and honor have opened the door and led the way to affinities which *morally* should have been revolting. The capital mistake of Jehoshaphat lay in leaving God out of the account. In his estimate of political forces and national strength, the God of his fathers seems to have been sadly, sinfully omitted. H. C.—It was in circumstances of marked prosperity that Jehoshaphat "joined affinity with Ahab." The sacred text specially notes this, partly to show that Jehoshaphat had not even an excuse for such a step, and partly, as we think, to indicate that this alliance must, in the first place, have been

sought by Ahab. The motives which would influence the king of Israel are not difficult to understand. The power of the country had been greatly weakened by Syria during the reign of Omri. Not only had Benhadad possessed himself of a number of cities, both east (Ramoth-Gilead, for example) and west of the Jordan, but the country had become virtually subject to him, since he claimed even in the capital, Samaria, the right of having "streets," or rather "squares"—that is, Syrian quarters of the town—which owned his dominion (cf. 1 K. 20:34). And now Benhadad had been succeeded by a son of the same name, equally warlike and ambitious. In these circumstances it was of the utmost importance to Ahab to secure permanent peace on his southern or Judean frontier, and, if possible, to engage as an active ally so powerful and wealthy a monarch as Jehoshaphat. On the other hand, it is not so easy to perceive the reasons which influenced the king of Judah. Of course he could not have wished to see the power of Syria paramount so close to his borders. Did he, besides, desire to have the long-standing (seventy years') breach between Judah and Israel healed? Had he a dim hope that by the marriage of his son with the daughter of Ahab the two realms might again be joined, and an undivided kingdom once more established in the house of David? The sacred text affords no clew to this political riddle. A. E.

**7, 8.** Jehoshaphat would not go forth until counsel had been sought at the mouth of the Lord. Then began a scene which the Scripture depicts with marvellous dramatic power. Four hundred false prophets, either worshippers of the golden calves, or fresh importations by Jezebel of Baalites, raised the cry, "Go up and prosper." Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. He would fain hear a prophet of the Lord; and Micaiah, the son of Imlah, was remembered by Ahab, though he added, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." It was he, according to Josephus, who had denounced Ahab for letting Benhadad escape (1 K. 20:35-43). *Benham.*

**8.** Matters of moment must be seriously dealt with. To tell a man of his sins as softly as Eli did his sons, reprove him as gently as Jehoshaphat did Ahab, "Let not the king say so," doth usually as much harm as good. I am persuaded the very manner of some men's reproof and exhortation hath hardened many a sinner in the way of destruction. To tell them of sin, or of heaven, or hell, in a dull, easy, careless language, doth make men think you

are not in good sadness, nor do mean as you speak ; but either you scarce think yourselves such things are true, or else you take them in such a slight and indifferent manner. Oh, sirs, deal with sin as sin, and speak of heaven and hell as they are, and not as if you were in jest ! *Barter.*

**22.** The scheme of false, lying prophets is agreed on and put in execution. In respect to the morality of this transaction as related to the Lord, it meets no other difficulty than is involved in every case of God's providential agency in the existence of sin—which agency is not a license for sinning—is never the employing of His moral subjects to do the sinning ; but is simply leaving the wicked to commit sin of their own free will, His shaping hand being interposed only to turn it to best moral account. H. C.

**23.** What warning could be more awful and yet more plain than that of the text? Ahab was told that he was listening to a lie. He had free choice to follow that lie or not, and he did follow it. After having put Micaiah into prison for speaking the truth to him, he went up to Ramoth-Gilead ; and yet he felt he was not safe. He went into the battle and disguised himself, hoping that by this means he should keep himself safe from evil. But God's vengeance was not checked by his paltry cunning. This chapter tells us not merely how Ahab was tempted, but it tells us how *we* are tempted in these very days. By every wilful sin that we commit we give room to the devil. By every wrong step that we take knowingly we give a handle to some evil spirit to lead us seven steps further wrong. And yet in every temptation God gives us a fair chance. He sends His prophets to us, as He sent Micaiah to Ahab, to tell us that the wages of sin is death, to set before us at every turn good and evil, that we may choose between them, and live and die according to our choice. The Bible is a prophet to us. Every man is a prophet to himself. The still small voice in a man's heart is the voice of God within us ; it is the Spirit of God striving with our spirits, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear, setting before us what is righteous, and noble, and pure, and Godlike, to see whether we will obey that voice, or whether we will obey our own selfish lusts, which tempt us to please ourselves. *C. Kingsley.*

Ahab wished to be guided by false prophets, and the justice of God decreed that he should be guided by them to his ruin. Sin is punished by sin. " God proves His holiness most of all

by this, that He punishes evil by evil, and destroys it by itself" (B&hr). Ahab had chosen lying instead of truth ; by lying—according to the *lex talionis*—he should be destroyed. The difficulty, in fact, is that of the permission of evil in the world ; of the use of existent evil by God to accomplish His purposes of good. *Hammond.*

**28.** " If thou return at all in peace" (responded Micaiah), " then the Lord hath not spoken by me ;" and he cried aloud to call the attention of the whole people to his words. A stanch man is he, swerving never a hair's breadth from the rough line of duty as the Lord's prophet. No conciliating words has he to say, bearing never so little upon his personal liberty or his hardships in prison. H. C.

The Bible is a book of texts because it is a book of types. It does not profess to give full histories, but refers to public records for these. Inspiration selects from histories typical or representative incidents to bring out the principles of the grace and truth of God. In the scene before us we have types of wickedness in Zedekiah and Ahab, the one ecclesiastical, the other civil, which may be profitably studied in the arguments they use contending with Micaiah, the representative of the truth of God. J. A. M.

**29.** We can hardly doubt that Jehoshaphat at least would have been well content to abandon the expedition. After the solicitude he had manifested for the sanction of one of the prophets of Jehovah, and after that the one who had been consulted had predicted the defeat of the army, the king of Judah must have had many misgivings. But it is not difficult to understand why, notwithstanding his fears, he did not draw back. For, in the first place, he had committed himself to the war by the rash and positive promise of verse 4. Moreover, he would have subjected himself to the imputation of cowardice had he deserted his ally because of a prophecy which threatened the latter with death. And, finally, we must remember that his own interests were threatened by Syria, and he may well have feared trouble from that quarter in case this war were abandoned. *Hammond.*

**32.** The author of Chronicles, with his eye on the history of Jehoshaphat and with a kindly view of his character, made the hand of God specially prominent here : " When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat they said, It is the king of Israel, and they compassed about him to fight ; but Jehoshaphat *cried out* and the *Lord helped him*, and God moved them to depart from him." H. C.—That it was a



cry for Divine help is the most probable, because it is almost an instinct, especially with a pious soul like Jehoshaphat, to cry to God in the moment of danger. That he had doubts as to whether the course he was pursuing was pleasing to God, would make him all the more ready to cry aloud for mercy the moment he found himself in peril. *Hammond.*

**33.** His cries deliver him; his cries, not to his pursuers, but to his God, whose mercy takes not advantage of our infirmity, but rescues us from those evils which we wilfully provoke. It is Ahab against whom, not the Syrians only, but God Himself intends this quarrel. The enemy is taken off from Jehoshaphat.

**34.** Oh, the just and mighty hand of that Divine providence which directeth all our actions to His own ends; which takes order where every shaft shall light, and guides the arrow of the strong archer into the joints of Ahab's harness! It was shot at a venture; falls by a destiny; and there falls where it may carry death to a hidden debtor. In all actions, both voluntary and casual, thy will, O God, shall be done by us, with whatever intentions. Little did the Syrian know whom he had stricken; no more than the arrow wherewith he struck. An invisible hand disposed of both, to the punishment of Ahab, to the vindication of Micaiah. How worthily, O God, art thou to be adored in Thy justice and wisdom; to be feared in Thy judgments! Too late doth Ahab now think of the fair warnings of Micaiah which he unwisely contemned; of the painful flatteries of Zedekiah which he stubbornly believed. That guilty blood of his runs down out of his wound into the midst of his chariot, and pays Naboth his arrearages. *Bp. H.*

**35.** The arrow that pierced Ahab's corselet was shot "in simplicity," without deliberate aim, with no thought of striking the king. It was an unseen Hand that guided that chance shaft to its destination. It was truly "the arrow of the Lord's vengeance." It would be deeply instructive could we know the thoughts of that unhappy king, as with the arrow in his side, and the blood draining from his wound and forming a sickening pool in the well of the chariot, he was stayed up those wretched, weary hours until the sunset against the Syrians. Surely he knew at last that "the Lord was God." He would think, it may be, of Elijah's and Micaiah's prophecies; he would think of Naboth's bleeding and mangled corpse; he would think, above all, that his sin had found him out, and that Jehovah had conquered. He had fought all his life for Baal, but it was

in vain; he had been wrestling not with flesh and blood, but with an invisible, irresistible, omnipotent God, and now he is thrown, cast down never to rise again. *Hammond.*

**38.** The hand of God also was seen in the sequel. The prophecies of Elijah and Micaiah seem to be in conflict. The one speaks of the dogs licking the blood of Ahab at "Samaria;" the other of Ahab falling at "Ramoath-Gilead." Who but God could so order events that there should be no conflict here? "The blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot;" perhaps more correctly, "into the bosom of the charioteer," on which the king leaned. "And *one* washed the chariot;" or rather, "And the driver washed himself in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked his blood"—*i.e.*, the blood of Ahab, which fell from the bosom of the driver.

**39.** The sacred history consists of selections from the secular under the guiding influence of Divine inspiration, with a view to illustrating the principles of the providence, truth, and grace of God. To illustrate such principles is the noblest end of writing. In these selections the notices of the wicked are generally brief. Perhaps no wicked man has a larger share of the sacred writings occupied with his acts than Ahab. Such acts are not agreeable to the Spirit of God. But in the hands of inspiration they are made an influence for good. They are recorded, apparently, because of their relation to the actions of prophets and good men. They are made to serve as a dark background to show up to admiration virtuous qualities, and to be made themselves odious in the contrast. The principles of the wicked should only be studied to be shunned. So God brings good out of evil. The sacred records have survived the secular. "The book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" has long since perished. The sacred records have come down to our times. In these, after a lapse of nearly thirty centuries, Ahab survives. But for these his name would not be known. Note (a) the Providence which has preserved the Scriptures evinces their Divine authenticity. (b) Things are permanent as they stand related to the everlasting God. (c) The posthumous influence points to the immortality of man. *J. A. M.*

We have here an awful commentary on such godless lives as his. His ivory palace and the cities which he built have passed away, together with that book of chronicles which contained their history; but what has remained, and will remain forevermore, is the fearful testimony that neither before nor since was

there ever any king in Israel like Ahab, who gave himself up so completely and unreservedly to work evil in the sight of the Lord. We see here a commentary upon this truth, that the question of lasting importance to each man is this: whether he has set himself with all his heart to serve the Lord, or whether he has determined to be rebellious; and that lasting praise belongs, not to him who builds cities and ivory palaces, but to him who fears the Lord and walks in His ways. *Bp. H. Goodwin.*

**40.** Thus closed the life of Ahab, after a reign of twenty years in consummate wickedness. Of Jehoshaphat we shall see much more when we study him in his place in the line of Judah's kings. Yet this affinity with Ahab brought upon him the Divine rebuke, as the author of Chronicles is careful to say: "When he returned in peace to his house in Jerusalem, Jehu, son of Hanani the seer, went out to meet him, saying, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore, is wrath upon thee from before the Lord. Nevertheless, there are good things found in thee in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God." H. C.

Signally true of Jeroboam and Ahab is that word of Solomon: *One sinner destroyeth much good.* How wide, how mighty, how disastrous the power for evil exerted by these self-willed, self-seeking rulers! And such power is exerted by every godless soul in its sphere, with results far wider, mightier, and more disastrous than is known this side the day of final account. A fearful part, indeed, of that account is *the making others to sin!*

*The highest, all-inclusive form of sin is impiety.* The course of impiety is, first the neglect, then the rejection, and then the defiance, of God; finally, the shameless substitution in His rightful place of another object of worship. These successive steps were partly taken by Jeroboam and completed by Omri and Ahab. And they are the steps, in part or whole, successively taken by every sinner through all time. Not indeed consciously taken. For as the soul becomes more self-asserting and seeking, the heart becomes more unbelieving, and the judgment and conscience lose their discernment and keenness. So, even unwittingly to himself, the man may reach the farthest stages of defiance toward God, an utter blinded self-idolatry. B.

## Section 15.

REIGN OF AHAZIAH, BETWEEN ONE AND TWO YEARS.

**17th to 18th of Jehoshaphat, of Judah.**

1 KINGS 22 : 51-53 ; 2 KINGS 1 : 1-18.

**1 K. 22 : 51** AHAZIAH the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the 52 seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherein he 53 made Israel to sin. And he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD, the God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

**2 K. 1 : 1, 2** And Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. And Ahaziah fell down through the lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether 3 I shall recover of this sickness. But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it because there 4 is no God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from the bed whither thou art gone up, but 5 shalt surely die. And Elijah departed. And the messengers returned unto him, and he said 6 unto them, Why is it that ye are returned? And they said unto him, There came up a man to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of

Baal-zebub the god of Ekron ? therefore thou shalt not come down from the bed whither  
 7 thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And he said unto them, What manner of man was he  
 8 which came up to meet you, and told you these words ? And they answered him, He was  
 an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the  
 9 Tishbite. Then *the king* sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to  
 him : and, behold, he sat on the top of the hill. And he spake unto him, O man of God,  
 10 the king hath said, Come down. And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I  
 be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And  
 11 there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. And again he sent  
 unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O  
 12 man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. And Elijah answered and said  
 unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy  
 13 fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. And  
 again he sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went  
 up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O  
 man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in  
 14 thy sight. Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and consumed the two former cap-  
 15 tains of fifty with their fifties : but now let my life be precious in thy sight. And the  
 angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him : be not afraid of him. And he  
 16 arose, and went down with him unto the king. And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD,  
 Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, is it be-  
 cause there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word ? therefore thou shalt not come down  
 17 from the bed whither thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. So he died according to the  
 word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram began to reign in his stead in  
 the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah ; because he had no son.  
 18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the book of the  
 chronicles of the kings of Israel ?

THE history of Ahaziah's reign begins in 1 K. 22 : 51, and is carried on, without any real break or pause in the sense, to 2 K. 1 : 18. How the two books came to be divided at this point is quite inexplicable. The division is most unhappy. Not only does it, without apparent reason, draw a strong line of demarkation in the middle of a reign, but it separates what it was evidently the intention of the writer most closely to connect—viz., the sins of the monarch and their punishment. Ahaziah began his reign by openly showing himself a devotee of Baal—by “walking in the way of his father and in the way of his mother,” the wicked Jezebel : therefore calamity immediately smote him—first Moab rebelled, threw off the Israelite yoke, and re-established its independence ; and then, within a short space, Ahaziah himself met with an accident which produced a dangerous illness. The writer relates barely the former fact, but enlarges on the latter, which gave occasion for one of the most remarkable of the miracles of Elijah. P. C.

Ahaziah, the eldest son, and of like spirit, succeeded Ahab. During the second year of his reign he accidentally fell from a window. Severe sickness ensued, which led him to send messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub if he would recover. God directed Elijah to inter-

cept the messengers, and to send them back with *His* reproof and warning to Ahaziah. In defiance of this Divine message Ahaziah sends three successive companies (of fifty each) forcibly to arrest Elijah. To the sharp summons of the two captains of the first and second companies, by a Divine impulse and direction, Elijah called down fire from heaven, which destroyed them all. God did this to teach king and people that He was to be revered in the person of His prophet, and to show that He would protect the faithful and destroy the disobedient. The third captain, heeding the terrible lesson, did reverence to Elijah as God's prophet, and was spared by God upon his own entreaty for mercy. Then Elijah, as bidden by the Lord, went obediently and boldly as aforesaid into the presence of the king and Jezebel, and repeated the exact words of the previous message. And no hand did this impious son and mother raise against him, notwithstanding the executed doom upon their two arresting bands, and his bold utterance of God's warning message. “So Ahaziah died, according to the word of the Lord.” This was Elijah's last recorded public act. B.

Nothing is related concerning him but what is unfortunate. He renewed the close alliance with Judah, which had been made by his father

(1 K. 22 : 44 ; 1 Chron. 20 : 36), uniting with Jehoshaphat in the maritime enterprise on which he was bent, and engaging in the construction of the joint fleet which was intended to make voyages to Ophir for gold. The ships were constructed in the port of Ezion-geber on the Red Sea at the head of the Gulf of Akabah, and were manned (apparently) by Jewish sailors only. A disaster followed. Scarcely had the fleet set sail when it was driven back to port by a violent tempest, which greatly damaged most of the vessels. Ahaziah ascribed the calamity to the unskillfulness of the Jewish mariners, and proposed that in any future voyage the ships should be manned by mixed crews from the two nations (2 K. 22 : 49) ; but Jehoshaphat was too proud to accept such a proposal, and a coolness must have followed in the relations between the allies, though there seems to have been no actual rupture. With the Moabites on the southeastern frontier of Israel the case was different. There Ahab's death produced an immediate rupture of peaceful relations (2 K. 1 : 1 ; 3 : 5) ; and a war followed (whereof we have the Moabite account on the " Stone of Mesha ") which seems to have consisted of little more than a series of Israelite reverses. Mesha recovered in succession Medeba, Baal-meon, Kirjathaim, Ataroth, Nebo and Jahaz, which had all been occupied by the Israelites. In Nebo alone he slew no fewer than seven thousand men. The entire country was recovered, and a number of ruined cities rebuilt and strongly fortified with walls, and towers, and gates, and moats. The entire tribute which Moab had previously paid (2 K. 3 : 4) was lost, and a powerful kingdom was set up on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, which threatened both Israel and Judah. A single year sufficed for the capture or massacre of all the Israelite garrisons, and for the complete establishment of the Moabites as an independent nation in the country which they claimed as their own. G. R.

**1. Then Moab rebelled.** The Moabites, who had once lorded it over Israel (Jud. 3 : 12-14), were reduced to subjection by David, and treated with extreme severity (2 S. 8 : 2). Nothing is related of them in Scripture from the date of this subjection to the time of Ahab, when they are found to be dependent on the kingdom of Israel, to which it has therefore been generally supposed that they fell at the separation of Israel from Judah. The Moabite monument, discovered in 1869, has now given reason to believe that, at the separation of the kingdoms, they recovered their independence,

but were again reduced by Omri, who, with his son Ahab, is said (in round numbers) to have " oppressed " them for " forty years." The enormous tribute exacted by Ahab implies a grievous oppression. Moab rebelled as soon as Ahab was dead, and easily regained her independence. It is this war of liberation which is the principal subject of the Moabite monument above mentioned, a monument which was set up by Mesha (chap. 3 : 4) to commemorate his successes. B. C.

**2.** Ahaziah had been walking on the roof of his palace in Samaria, and had leaned against what seems to have been a latticed fence running round the roof. The fence gave way. The king fell either into the street or into the inner court of the palace, and was so severely injured that he became alarmed for his life. After the example of his father and mother he had been a worshipper of Baal. In particular, Ahaziah had honored him as Baal-zebub, the god of flies. This deity would appear to have been held in peculiar reverence at Ekron, the most northerly of the five great cities of the Philistines, and, therefore, nearest to Samaria. Thither, accordingly, Ahaziah sent his messengers, immediately after his fall, with the inquiry whether or not he should recover from its effects. It was a daring violation of the law of God (Lev. 20 : 6). It was a countenancing of idolatry in the worst form in which it had been supported by Ahab and Jezebel. And the offence was rendered still more heinous by the recent character of that work of reformation which had been effected by Elijah. W. M.

The same hand that guided Ahab's shaft cracks Ahaziah's lattice. How infinite variety of plagues hath the just God for obstinate sinners ! Whether in the field or in the chamber, He knows to find them out. No place is safe for the man that is at variance with God. The body of Ahaziah was not more sick than his soul was graceless. *Bp. H.*

**3.** Of the whole period of ten years between the calling of Elisha and the summons to meet the messengers of Ahaziah, we know, so far as concerns Elijah, absolutely nothing.

**3, 4.** The message at once shows the light in which the conduct of Ahaziah is to be regarded. It was a denial of the God of Israel. It was the worship of one who was no God ; and the soul that so sinned was to die. Elijah instantly obeyed " the word of the Lord," met the messengers of Ahaziah with the same startling suddenness as that with which he had before met Ahab, delivered his message, and with equal suddenness " departed." At no time

was it his part to argue. He was "a voice of one crying in the wilderness." The voice was to cry at the appointed moment; and when its cry was uttered to be silent. Let men hear or let them forbear: the work of the voice was done. The messengers instantly returned. W. M.

**8. It is Elijah the Tishbite.** No doubt he suspected it before. The boldness, the daring, the sudden appearance, and equally sudden disappearance of the man who could send him such a message, were traits that could hardly belong to any but to one whom he and his father's house had so much occasion to remember. The message itself too touched his conscience; and although not the prophet himself, but his image, called up by his imagination, stood before him, he could only repeat, as it were, the exclamation of Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth, "Thou hast found me, O mine enemy." W. M.

**9.** Behold the true son of Jezebel: the anguish of his disease, the expectation of death, cannot take off the edge of his persecution of Elijah. It is against his will that his death-bed is not bloody. Had Ahaziah meant any other than a cruel violence to Elijah he had sent a peaceable messenger to call him to the court; he had not sent a captain with a band of soldiers to fetch him. The instruments which he useth carry revenge in their face. If he had not thought Elijah more than a man, what needed a band of fifty to apprehend one? and if he did think him such, why would he send to apprehend him by fifty? Surely Ahaziah knew of old how miraculous a prophet Elijah was; what power that man had over all their base deities; what command of the elements, of the heavens; and yet he sends to attach him. It is a strange thing to see how wilfully godless men strive against the stream of their own hearts; hating that which they know good; fighting against that which they know divine. What a gross disagreement is in the message of this Israelitish captain: "Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down!" If he were a man of God, how hath he offended? And if he have justly offended the anointed of God, how is he a man of God? And if he be a man of God and have not offended, why should he come down to punishment? Here is a kind confession with a false heart, with bloody hands. The world is full of those windy courtesies, real cruelties. *Bp. H.*

**10.** Elijah took the scorner at his word. "If I be a man of God," he said, "let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty." The prophet had dealt with fire from

heaven before. It may be that near that very spot he had seen the heavens open at his prayer and the fire came down that "consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." Thus no doubt he prayed again, and there rushed forth fire from heaven, and consumed the captain and his fifty. W. M.

Ahaziah, the son of the wicked Jezebel, had challenged Jehovah to a trial of strength by first ignoring him, and then sending a troop of soldiers to arrest his prophet. Was Elijah to succumb without an effort, or was he to vindicate the majesty and honor of Jehovah? He had no power of himself to do either good or harm. He could but pray to Jehovah, and Jehovah, in His wisdom and perfect goodness, would either grant or refuse his prayer. If He granted it, the punishment inflicted would not be Elijah's work, but His. God regarded it as a fitting time for making a signal example, and, so regarding it, He inspired a spirit of indignation in the breast of His prophet, who thereupon made the prayer which He saw fit to answer. The judgment was in accordance with the general tone and tenor of the law, which assigns "tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil," and visits with death every act of rebellion against God. P. C.

It was not long since Elijah had fetched fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice (1 K. 18:38), in token of God's acceptance of that sacrifice as an atonement for the sins of the people; but they having slighted that, now the fire falls, not on the sacrifice, but on the sinners themselves (verse 10). What an interest the prophets had in heaven; what the Spirit of God in them demanded, the power of God effected; Elijah did but speak and it was done; he that formerly had fetched water from heaven now fetches fire. Oh, the power of prayer! *Concerning the work of My hands, command ye Me* (Isa. 45:11). What an interest Heaven had in the prophets! God was always ready to plead their cause, and avenge the injuries done to them. Kings shall still be *rebuked for their sakes* and charged to do *His prophets no harm*. One Elijah is more to God than ten thousand captains and their fifties. Doubtless Elijah did this by a Divine impulse, and yet our Saviour would not take the disciples to draw it into a precedent (Luke 9:54). H.

In his rebuke of James and John no word is spoken by our Lord in regard to the conduct of Elijah. What he finds fault with is simply the spirit of His own disciples, and the whole tone

of the narrative implies that all that He would say was this, "Ye do not understand the nature of the Dispensation which I am introducing, and ye err in thinking that my mission is to be marked by the same judgments called down directly upon sinners as those which were exhibited in the Dispensation that is passing away." For anything contained in the passage, therefore, our Lord accepted the conduct of Elijah as that of a righteous servant of His Father in Heaven, and declared only that He Himself had come to fulfil all righteousness in a different way. Not, in other words, in any change in the character of God, and certainly not in the conduct of the captains and their companies, but in the outward circumstances of men, in the nature of the Old and New Testament Dispensations, as adapted to their different stages in the history of the world, is the explanation to be found. Neither in the destruction brought through Elijah upon the companies of Ahaziah, nor in that upon the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal at an earlier period, is there the least appearance of merely human passion, or of a spirit of revenge that knew not where to pause. In both the prophet acts as one who feels that he is the messenger of God, clothed with His commission, under an obligation to execute His will—and that will was regulated by thought of the condition of those who were then training for better things. W. M.

Elijah's actions are more for wonder than for precedent. Not in his own defence would the prophet have been the death of so many, if God had not by a peculiar instinct made him an instrument of this just vengeance. The Divine justice finds it meet to do this for the terror of Israel; that He might teach them what it was to condemn, to persecute a prophet; that they might learn to fear Him whom they had forsaken, and confess that Heaven was sensible of their insolencies and impieties. If not as visibly yet as certainly doth God punish the violations of His ordinances, the affronts offered to His messengers, still and ever. Not ever with the same speed; sometimes the punishment overtakes the act; sometimes dogs it afar off, and seizeth upon the offender when his crime is forgotten; here, no sooner is the word out of Elijah's mouth than the fire is out of heaven.

Oh, the wonderful power of a prophet! There sits Elijah in his coarse mantle on the top of the hill, and commands the heavens, and they obey him: "Let fire fall down from heaven." He needs no more but say what he

would have done: the fire falls down, as before upon the sacrifice in Carmel, so now upon the soldiers of Ahaziah. What is man in the hands of his Maker? One flash of lightning hath consumed this one and fifty. And if all the hosts of Israel, yea, of the world, had been in their rooms, there had needed no other force. What madness is it for him, whose breath is in his nostrils, to contend with the Almighty! Bp. H.

**11, 12.** Undismayed by what had happened, the king now sent another captain and his fifty upon the same errand; but there is a difference in the message. It is even harsher and more imperative than before. "O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly." There was no "quickly" in the first demand. In the second there is. The message on the first occasion had perhaps not been imperative enough. A greater show of boldness may alarm the prophet. But Elijah answered as he had already done: "If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty." The miracle of destruction was instantly repeated: "The fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty."

**13.** A third company was now sent, and so far apparently without any change in the king's mind. But there was a change in the temper of the captain to whom the charge had been committed. Insolence, scorn, impiety have no place in his mind. He exhibits meekness and submission. He "came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee let my life and the life of these fifty be precious in thy sight." W. M.

**14-16.** Elijah does more than grant the request of this third captain. God is not severer with those that stand it out against Him than He is ready to show mercy to those that repent and submit to Him; never any found it in vain to cast themselves upon the mercy of God. This captain not only has his life spared, but is permitted to carry his point; Elijah, being so commanded by the angel, *goes down with him to the king* (verse 15). Thus he shows that he before refused to come, not because he feared the king or court, but because he would not be imperiously summoned, and would not lessen the honor of his Master; he *magnifies his office*. He comes boldly to the king and tells him to his face (let him take it as he may) what he had before sent to him (verse 16), that he should surely and shortly die; he mitigates not the sentence either for fear of the king's displeas-

ure or in pity to his misery : the God of Israel has condemned him, let him send to see whether the god of Ekron can deliver him. So thunderstruck is Ahaziah with this message when it comes from the prophet's own mouth, that neither he nor any of those about him durst offer him any violence, nor so much as give him an affront ; but out of that den of lions he comes unhurt, like Daniel. Who can harm those whom God will shelter ? H.

The awful destruction by fire from heaven, at the word of Elijah, of the two first parties sent to apprehend him, must have tended powerfully to impress upon the nation the fact that the Lord still asserted His right to reign over them, and would be known to them in His protesting judgments, since they would not know Him in His mercies. His cheerful going with the third party, the leader of which approached him with humble entreaties, must have suggested that the door to those mercies was still open to those who becomingly approached it. This was practical preaching of the kind that this people could most easily understand. The fearless prophet repeated in person to the king the words of rebuke and death that he had sent by the messengers ; and the doomed king was too awestruck, after what had passed, to make any attempt upon his liberty or life. According to his prediction, Ahaziah died soon after, and, as he had no son, was succeeded by his brother Jehoram. *Kitto*.

According to the word of the prophet, Ahaziah dies. Not two whole years doth he sit in the throne of Israel, which he now must yield, in the want of children, to his brother. Wickedness shortens his reign. He had too much of Ahab and Jezebel to expect the blessing, either of length or prosperity of government. As always in the other, so oftentimes in this world doth God testify His anger to wicked men. Some live long that they may aggravate their judgment ; others die soon that they may hasten it. *Bp. H.*

**17. In the second year of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat.** The similarity of names in the two royal houses of Israel and Judah at this time, and at no other, seems to be the consequence of the close ties which for once united the two reigning families, and is well noted among the "undesigned coincidences" of the Old Testament. The accession of the Israelite Jehoram in the second year of the Jewish king of the same name involves some difficulty. In chap. 3 : 1 we are told that he ascended the throne in the eighteenth year

of Jehoshaphat ; and this agrees with previous statements as to the accession of Jehoshaphat and the length of his reign. B. C.—The apparent discrepancy is reconciled by supposing that Jehoshaphat associated his son Jehoram in the kingdom in his seventeenth year, when he was about to enter upon the Syrian war, so that the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat was also the second year of Jehoram. It is certain that association was largely practised in Egypt at a date long anterior to Jehoshaphat, and David's proclamation of Solomon as king was an association, so that the explanation is not untenable. **Because he had no son**—*i. e.*, because he, Ahaziah, had no son, he was succeeded by his younger brother, Jehoram. P. C.

**2 K. 1 : 17, 18.** *Unwritten history.* Ahaziah died, and Jehoram his brother succeeded him. "The rest of his acts" were written "in the book of the chronicles of the Kings of Israel ;" but Scripture has not preserved them. Why should it ? What was there in the records of that brief and evil existence to entitle the memory of it to live ? "The memory of the just is blessed ; but the name of the wicked shall rot" (Prov. 10 : 7). Enough is written to hold him up to after-ages as an example of the certainty of retribution. Then Scripture buries him with the epitaph, "So he died according to the word of the Lord which Elijah had spoken." J. O.

*Principles applicable here and elsewhere.* God is sovereign in putting down and raising up (Ps. 75 : 7), and He decides all human issues. But equally the other and balancing truth is made evident in all this inspired history : that man is left free to work, in his sphere, as he wills. No compulsion is upon him stronger than *motive* ; and that motive attracting and persuading the soul in one direction—a wise, right and happy direction. Both God's sovereign working and man's unconstrained working are plainly revealed as *facts* ; facts which enforce a belief in *both* truths, though they do not touch the explanation of the underlying mystery. A further hint of relief we find in this additional fact manifest in the history : Although God has announced a definite course of action toward the nation, yet He deals with *every king and his people* according to *their own conduct* ; nay, more, although He has foretold the nation's doom on account of its iniquities, yet He continues to hold forth every motive and to exercise every means to save it. From this we learn, at least, that God's sovereignty is not arbitrary—exercised without reason ; and that it is gracious—exercised for good alone. B.

## Section 16.

## ELIJAH'S TRANSLATION, AND ELISHA'S SUCCESSION.

2 KINGS 2 : 1-18.

2 : 1 AND it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, 2 that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee ; for the LORD hath sent me as far as Beth-el. And Elisha said, As the LORD liveth, and 3 as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know it ; hold 4 ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee ; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not 5 leave thee. So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy 6 master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it ; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee ; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went 7 on. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off : 8 and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on 9 dry ground. And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let 10 a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing : *nevertheless*, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee ; but if not, it shall 11 not be so. And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder ; and Elijah went up by 12 a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof ! And he saw him no more : and he took hold of his 13 own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from 14 him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they were divided hither and thither : and Elisha 15 went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were at Jericho over against him saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and 16 bowed themselves to the ground before him. And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men ; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master : lest peradventure the spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, 17 or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men ; and they sought three days, but 18 found him not. And they came back to him, while he tarried at Jericho ; and he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

It is at this point that the sacred narrative introduces one of the greatest events of the old dispensation, the ascent of Elijah. The chronology is intricate, but the event seems to have taken place about the time of Ahaziah's death. The chief difficulty arises from the letter which Elijah sent to Jehoram, king of Judah, prophesying his destruction because he followed the sins of the house of Ahab. This, by the way, is the only point of connection between Elijah and the house of David, and the only mention

of his name in the Chronicles (21 : 12-15). Now Jehoshaphat, the father of Jehoram, took part in the campaign which is related after Elijah's ascension, and in which too Elisha appears as the prophet. That Elisha ever left his attendance upon Elijah to act in public, before he received the prophet's mantle, is a supposition quite unwarranted by the history. That the letter of Elijah to Jehoram was written before but delivered after his ascension, is a violent assumption. The true and simple expla-



nation is, that Jehoram began to reign over Judah some years before his father's death. There is therefore no reason to depart from the order of the narrative in Kings. P. S.

It is probable that during the eight or ten years of Elijah's life, after the anointing of Elisha, the two prophets were quietly and actively ministering in the cities and villages of Israel. Taught by the "still small voice" of Horeb, Elijah would speak to the people of Jehovah's goodness and mercy, and seek to win them to spiritual service and love. We read also of sons of the prophets settled in Bethel, which had been one of the chief seats of idolatry; and there are indications that "schools of the prophets" were organized and established throughout the land, and that to these Elijah devoted some years of assiduous culture, indicating that under his influence true religion made considerable progress in Israel. *Allon.*

Elijah's work was finished. But he lies not down to die in despondency and gloom. God has assured him of an end more glorious than that of any of the whole race of men. The clouds that have swept over his day of toil and endurance are to pass away before the golden evening radiance, which for him shall burst instantly into the effulgence of heaven's eternal day.

**1-5.** *From Gilgal Elijah goes, with Elisha, to Bethel and Jericho, to take leave of the sons of the prophets.* No dates are recorded of Elijah's life. From Gilead he came; in Samaria his ministry was performed, perhaps for twenty years; to Gilead he returns and thence is translated. Of this translation, like Moses, he had received beforehand a Divine intimation. He is now directed first to pay a parting visit to those schools of the prophets that he had nurtured and trained. In these schools were men whom God had raised up from among the people, to act as instructors of His law and truth to such as desired and accepted this teaching. From these men God selected the superior prophets, and endowed them with special inspiration to declare His counsel and purpose as events demanded. Thus God had done and continued to do, in order to preserve the truth among His people, to counteract the influence of false and idolatrous teachers, to reclaim the people from iniquity and recover them from idolatry, and to hold firm in their integrity as many as would obey and serve Him.

Thrice, in his journey to the Jordan, Elijah sought to check Elisha's purpose to accompany him. He seems to have designed in this to test

the steadfastness and strength of Elisha's faith. But the heart of Elisha firmly stood the trial to the end. He answers by the double asseveration "As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth"—thus appealing to the eternity of God and the immortality of the soul—"I will not leave thee." So he abides at Elijah's side until they are parted by the whirlwind which bears the prophet heavenward. At Bethel and Jericho the same events transpire. Words of instruction, encouragement and blessing Elijah spake to the pupils from whom he was now finally to part. And they seemed to have inferred the issue and naturally spoke of it to Elisha. His reply was not a denial or rebuke, but a caution that they should not suffer the fact they understood to be noised abroad. B.

**1. From Gilgal.** The Gilgal here mentioned, from which the two prophets "went down" to Bethel, must be sought in the hill country of Ephraim, and at a higher elevation than Bethel itself, which is in the mountain region. Such a position belongs to the modern *Jiljilieb*, on the highland between Nablous and Beitin (Bethel), about eight and a half miles from the latter; and this place is therefore now commonly supposed to be the Gilgal here mentioned. Some regard it as the ordinary residence of Elisha. B. C.

**3.** No record of Elijah's parting intercourse with these sons of the prophets is given. We are left to imagine the seriousness, fidelity, and tenderness of his last words to these pious youths, whom he had gathered and trained for the religious ministry of the land. It is touching and beautiful to think that such should have been his last earthly occupation, his last counsels and blessings; that his last words should have been words of help to those who were to be God's witnesses in the land. *Allon.*

**6-8.** *From Jericho the two prophets proceed to the Jordan and cross the river.* Fifty of Elijah's pupils follow them afar off, and witnessed the crossing of the river, but no more. In the method of that crossing, the miraculous dividing of the waters, we witness Elijah's last prophetic act. Herein we see conclusive proof, not only that he maintained his trust steadfast to the end, but that his faith culminated in force and sublimity at the very end. And God responded to his faith. As, under Divine direction, Moses at the Red Sea stretched forth his rod—the sign of his office—so now Elijah smites the waters with his mantle, and God honors the sign and divides the river as at Joshua's entrance. "So they two went over on dry ground." Into Gilead they went, Elijah's na-

tive country, whence he would fain *depart to be with Christ*: into Gilead, under the shadow of Pisgah, whence Moses had finally withdrawn from the leadership and the love of the long-wandering people of God. B.

**6. They two went on.** There was silence in all probability between them. They were solemnized by the consciousness of a Divine presence, by the feeling that they were every moment approaching nearer to an as yet unknown manifestation of the Divine counsels, by the persuasion that one of them at least was standing on the threshold of the unseen world. Under impressions such as these Elisha had already declined conversation with the sons of the prophets at Bethel and at Jericho. Under the same impressions he was silent now. Nor would Elijah be inclined to speak. His departure itself, and not the words with which he might accompany it, was to be the lesson to his companion and friend. When we stand by the death-bed of the child of God our impulse is not so much to speak as to learn the lessons that are taught us by the scene. Thus Elijah and Elisha—"they two went on." W. M.

**7.** By the ford opposite *Beth-Nimrah*, or *Bethabara*, did Elijah most probably pass, when he had vainly attempted to prevent his faithful Elisha from accompanying him, as, for the last time, he hastened toward the mountains of his native Gilead, thence to be carried up to his eternal home. Up to that bold peak of Quarantania behind, the sons of the prophets had climbed, and there they "stood to view" and watch as master and scholar walked across the plain, till they descended to the wooded bank. There was no delay, as the stricken waters made a path for them dryshod; and thence they would naturally follow the road to the mountains. Not long had they walked, still absorbed in converse, when the chariot and horses of fire appeared, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Not long—for when Elisha returned, the sons of the prophets had not yet relinquished their post of observation. Still had they gazed on, waiting till their fathers should return, when soon they recognized Elisha, coming back in all the power and spirit of Elijah. It could not, therefore, have been far from this ford that heaven and earth were brought so near together. There is a peculiar appropriateness in this identification since he who was to come "in the spirit and power of Elias" appeared, completed his mission and discharged his function of herald of the Kingdom, by the baptism of Christ at Bethabara, just opposite, near the very spot where his

prototype had disappeared. By this ford, too, our Lord and His disciples passed over Jordan, when they came by the plain on the east side and ascended from Jericho to Jerusalem. *Tristram*.

**8.** The use of the "mantle" had undoubtedly a meaning. It had been the most characteristic token of the prophet's work. As a garment of rough hair, it reminded both him and all who witnessed the use to which it was put, of his privations in the wilderness, of his loneliness, of his toils, of his self-denials, and of his sufferings, in the execution of his mission. It was associated with the thought of a good fight fought, of a course finished, of faith kept. Why should it not be a source of strength to him in a departing hour? It had covered him alike in his struggles and in his triumphs, in his sorrows and his joys. He rolled it together as his rod, struck the waters of the river with it, and he and Elisha passed over dry-shod. W. M.

**9, 10.** *The sublime offer of Elijah, and the equally sublime request of Elisha.* Never were two human souls moved by higher inspiration and more hallowed aspiration than in this invitation and response. The offer came from a deeper feeling than even Elijah's love to Elisha. It was actuated by the desire to aid his inexperienced successor in lifting the burden he was about to lay down. And back of this desire was his yearning of soul for the glory of Jehovah to be manifested in the future blessing of His people. Thus true to God's glory and to His people's welfare was this grand man to the last. Once more Elisha could be availed of his mightily prevalent intercession. And how pure and lofty is the responsive request of the younger prophet! No thought of self-elevation marred its singleness and grandeur. About to take Elijah's place and work, he knows his need of wisdom and courage, of strength and steadfastness of soul, of unflinching trust and fidelity toward God. Therefore he simply asks for these qualities—so eminently vouchsafed to Elijah—that he too may carry forward God's work among His people. Not for *more* than Elijah's own gifts does he ask; but for the double portion allotted to a first-born son—for *thus much more* than the Lord's remaining prophets. So pure, lofty and large is Elisha's aspiration and request. And Elijah's answer indicates his full appreciation of its reach and greatness. *He* cannot assure the reception of such high gifts. He can only, and *will* fervently, refer the petition to God. And God Himself will give a sign, if He grant it. As we know, the

sign was given, and the prayer in its real intent and spirit abundantly answered. Living longer and in closer relations to the people, Elisha wrought twice as many miracles as Elijah, and exerted a wider personal influence. But none save Moses is comparable with Elijah in strength, depth and permanence of effect wrought upon Israel and Judah. B.

Elisha reckoned himself Elijah's first-born spiritual son, and asked for the elder brother's share, because he had been designated as successor, and would need more than others for his work. The new sense of responsibility is coming on him, and teaching him his need. Well for us if higher positions make us lowlier in the consciousness of our own unfitness without Divine help! Elijah knew that his spirit was not his to give, and can only refer his successor to the Fountain from which he had drawn; for the sign which He gives is obviously not within his power to determine. If the Lord shows him, who is left, the ascending master, He will give the servant his desire. A. M.

**11, 12.** *The ascension of Elijah, and its effect upon Elisha. As they still went on, and talked, they were parted. Elijah had referred Elisha's petition fervently to God, and now, like his ascending Lord, was uttering words of instruction and counsel and encouragement. Neither thought nor petition had he for himself, until God's time and summons came. And the next record of Elijah—nine hundred years later—reveals him as talking with his transfigured Lord concerning the one central theme of heaven and eternity. Suddenly a violent storm surrounds and encloses them. Near to the earth Elisha sees a chariot and horses of fire, parting him from Elijah. And instantly he beholds Elijah caught up in the tempest and borne heavenward. The flaming chariot and horses were an acknowledged symbol of present Divine power and protection. Elisha may have witnessed this symbol, or, like his servant in Dothan (2 K. 6:17), this may simply have been a spiritual vision.*

No further record have we of this transcendent marvel. We are only assured of this, that in a moment, by the mighty working of Christ, the body of Elijah was changed into the likeness of His own glorified body. Here, as in the case of Enoch, was a complete victory over death. And here the event was far more glorious, significant, and cheering. Enoch's quiet, unseen translation was suited to the undemonstrative character of that early time. Elijah's visible ascent, like Christ's, was equally suited

to the period of Jehovah's signal exhibition of Himself—through His express ordinances and by His prophets, to His chosen people. In the glory thus reflected from the exaltation of Elijah, God strikingly commended to people and prophets the worth of truth and fidelity, of trust in Him, and of purity in His worship. And He intimated that the reward of all these excellences in character and life was to be experienced in a loftier, freer and more beautiful heavenly existence.

In his exclamation, Elisha touchingly utters the noblest testimony concerning his ascended teacher. First, his loving heart overflows with a sense of its bereavement, in the tender appellation, *Father*. Then as the thought fills his own great mind of that intrepid, energetic, and effective life, and of its grand results in the spiritual deliverance and help of the people, he utters his grief in behalf of the people's loss: *Thou who wast the defence of Israel—"the chariot and the horseman thereof"—art departed!* (And to himself, at his departure, these identical words were spoken, with this meaning, 2 K. 13:14.) Then, as signifying this great loss to the nation and to himself, although he had received the sign of God's answer to his own desire, he rent his garments in twain. B.

**11. Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven;** literally, *and Elijah went up in a storm into the heavens*. There is no mention of a "whirlwind;" and "the heavens" are primarily the visible firmament or sky which overhangs the earth. Elijah, like our Lord, rose bodily from the earth into the upper region of the air, and was there lost to sight. Three only of the seed of Adam—Enoch, Elijah, Jesus—have passed from earth to heaven without dying. P. C.—Literally, "Elijah went up in a storm into the sky." There is no mention of a whirlwind, but only of a storm; and the word translated "heaven" is properly the visible firmament or sky. No honest exegesis can explain this passage in any other sense than as teaching the translation of Elijah, who was taken from the earth like Enoch, without dying. B. C.

Elijah is not said to have gone up into heaven in a chariot of fire with horses of fire. The chariots and horses of fire appeared, but they are so spoken of as to show that they were rather the *accompaniment* than the *means* of this translation. Such appearances Elisha actually beheld waiting, as it were, upon Elijah in the last moments of his life upon earth; and then, with that glory as his attendant satellite, he saw him swept away in a storm toward

heaven. Thus with all reverence for the Sacred Word may we be permitted to speak of the translation of Elijah. W. M.

There are three bodily inhabitants of heaven, Enoch, Elijah, our Saviour Christ: the first, before the Law; the second, under the Law; the third, under the Gospel—all three in a several form of translation. Our blessed Saviour raised Himself to and above the heavens by His own immediate power: He ascended as the Son; they, as servants: He, as God; they, as creatures. Elijah ascended by the visible ministry of angels; Enoch, insensibly. *Bp. H.*

The essential fact is that Elijah was translated without dying. Not only does the credibility of the history demand this; but the entire biblical conception demands it also. If the gospels do not accept myths as veritable history, if the transfiguration of our Lord be a fact, and not a mere vision or legend, if there be any significance in the representation of Moses and Elias appearing with Him in glory, we must literally accept the representation that Elijah was translated without tasting death. The miracle it is impossible to remove, and those who reject miracles must reject the narrative as a whole. W. M.

Elijah was going and talking when the storm from heaven came to take him. There can be no better posture or state for the messenger of our dissolution to find us in than in a diligent prosecution of our calling. The busy attendance of our holy vocation is no less pleasing to God than an immediate devotion. Happy the servant whom the Master, when He comes, shall find so doing. *Bp. H.*

The removal of Elijah from the earth was in keeping with the manner and work of his life upon the earth. Like Enoch, we may say of him that "by faith he was translated that he should not see death;" and it is noteworthy that, so far as we know anything of it from the fragment of his prophecy preserved by Jude, Enoch's career was just such a struggle and protest against prevalent iniquity as that of Elijah was. Thus both of these exceptions to the great law of human mortality were granted to men who had been faithful witnesses to God and His truth in periods of general apostasy. *W. M. Taylor.*

The teaching of the event is plain. As for the pre-Mosaic ages the translation of Enoch, and for the earlier Mosaic epoch the mysterious death of Moses, so for the prophetic period the carrying to heaven of Elijah, witnessed of a life beyond death, and of death as the wages of

sin, which God could remit, if He willed, in the case of faithful service. Enoch and Elijah were led round the head of the valley on the heights, and reached the other side without having to go down into the cold waters flowing in the bottom; and though we cannot tread their path, the joy of their experience has not ceased to be a joy to us, if we walk with God. Death is still the coming of the chariot and horses of fire to bear the believer home. A. M.

One of the purposes, doubtless, of this translation of Elijah was to make plainer to our dull understandings the upward heavenly going of every saint when his work on earth is over. We are so apt to follow the body with our thoughts and to imagine our departed friends in the grave, that here God made the body go upward that we may be weaned of this wrong and heathenish notion. Enoch and Elijah certainly are not alone of men in heaven. They are there with all God's saints who have departed this life. Paul shows us that to depart is to be with Christ. Elijah's ascent is to elicit our look upward for our departed friends—to think of them as with the cloud of witnesses. *H. Crosby.*

Nor are we without assurance that the departing soul at death enters upon a state of joy and blessedness, as appears by the promise to the penitent thief on the cross; the parable of the rich man and Lazarus; Christ telling the Sadducees that God "is not the God of the dead, but of the living;" the translation of Enoch and Elijah, and the appearance of Moses with Elijah on the mount of transfiguration; our Lord's arguing that they who kill the body are not able to kill the soul; His commending His spirit into His Father's hands, and its being in Paradise while His body was in the grave; His promising, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be;" Stephen's seeing heaven opened, and his praying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; our being come to the spirits of just men made perfect; Paul's desiring to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better, and to be absent from the body and present with the Lord; the blessedness of the dead which die in the Lord. *Baxter.*

Those who would find Elijah, let them aspire to the heavenly Paradise. Let them follow the high steps of his sincere faithfulness, strong patience, undaunted courage, fervent zeal. Shortly, let them walk in the ways of his holy and constant obedience; at last, God shall send the fiery chariot of death, to fetch them up to that heaven of heavens, where they shall triumph in everlasting joys. *Bp. H.*

The translation of Elijah, as aforetime of Enoch, was the transfiguration of life as well as of death. As such, it is hardly possible to overestimate its value to the faith of the saints of the olden world. For the Christian, too, whose life is hid with Christ in God, there come, now and then, in the rare, supreme moments of peculiar experiences, sometimes in the midst of life, sometimes as the end draws near, a Divine rapture and translation out of the earthy into the heavenly. It is then that others nearest them, if they may not at once follow on, do, at any rate, catch glimpses and get inspirations which henceforth are not to be forgotten. And the best of it is, such disclosures help us to such worthier conceptions of the Christian life; the life with possibilities so inconceivably richer, higher, sweeter, mightier than the dull heart of worldly wisdom could ever attain to. Oh, for their mantle to fall on us! *Interior.*

The translation of Elijah conveyed to the Old Testament Church an intimation of immortality. No doubt life and immortality are brought clearly to light only in the Gospel of Christ. Of Him alone who rose on the third morning from the grave can we say that He hath abolished death, and hath given us the assurance that an hour is coming when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. But as for all the other truths of the Christian dispensation, so for this great truth there was a preparation made before Jesus came. We are distinctly taught by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews that those saints of old who received the promises, and were led in doing so to confess that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, thus plainly declared that they sought a better country, even an heavenly (Heb. 11:16); and throughout the prophets there are not a few passages which show that the expectation of life in a world to come was rising upon the mind of Israel with increasing clearness as time ran on. Such views the translation of Elijah must have deepened and confirmed. W. M.

One such translation, well certified, might spread its influence over vast countries, and send it down through long succeeding ages. How grand and yet how specific the testimony it bears to the resurrection of the righteous dead! How it must awaken thought and inquiry! For it could not be supposed that the blessed home for God's saints in His presence could be for Enoch and Elijah only; it could not be assumed that those two human bodies and those only among all the saved would find place before the throne of God. Certainly, men

must infer that the bodies of other saints—nay of all the saints—must reach that blessed world, as well as theirs, in God's due time, and in His ordained method. It scarcely need be suggested that in an age, drifting like that of Elijah so fearfully away from the true God into Baal-worship, the call for such a demonstration of the future life would be urgent, and the scope for its influence vast. H. C.

A most instructive view of Elijah's translation is its parallel and contrast with Christ's ascension. The one was by outward means; the other, by inward energy. Storm and fire bore Elijah up into a region strange to him. Christ ascended up where He was before, returning by the propriety of His nature to His eternal dwelling-place. The one is accomplished with significant disturbance, of whirlwind and flame; the other is gentle, like the life which it closed, and the last sight of Him was of extended hands of blessing. Each life closed in a manner corresponding to its character. The one was swift and sudden. The other was a slow solemn motion, vividly described as being "borne upward" and as "going into heaven." The one bore a mortal into "heaven." In the other, the Son of God, our great High-priest, "hath passed through the heavens," and now, far above them all, fills all things. . . . And the Scripture teaches us ever to associate together the departure and the coming of the Lord, and always when we meditate on His ascension to prepare a place for us, to think of His real presence with us through the ages, and of His coming again to receive us to Himself. A. M.

Midway between the incarnation and the ascension, the transfiguration blended the humiliation and the glory, the humanity and the Divinity, of our Lord. As of His person, so of His kingdom: this was the unifying symbol, which conjoined all agencies and dispensations in Jesus as the centre of glory and of power. The great law-giver of the Old Testament and the grandest of the prophets came in their heavenly forms and splendor to do homage to the Son of man on earth, to testify of His crucifixion as the crowning of their work, and to greet the apostles of His future Church. The unity of doctrine, the unity of purpose, the unity of ministration, the unity of fellowship, the unity of redemption, were thus manifested in Him who "gathered in one all things which are in heaven and which are on earth." Supreme in authority as the Son of God, Jesus must be heard and obeyed by every soul that would be saved. Yet from the glory of that

presence which would fill us with dread He comes to us with the tender voice of friendship, saying, "Arise; be not afraid." Equally at home with God in heaven and with man on earth, passing and re-passing from one world to the other, He has effaced the shadows of the spiritual world, has peopled that world with loved and familiar names, and transfigured death into His own glorified presence. J. P. T.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah set forth Christ's death, which was their theme, as the climax of revelation. The Law with its requirement and its sacrifices, prophecy with its forward-looking face, stand there, in their representatives, and bear witness that their converging lines meet in Jesus. The finger that wrote the Law and the finger that smote and parted Jordan are each lifted to point to Him. The stern voices that spoke the commandments and that hurled threatenings at the unworthy occupants of David's throne both proclaim "behold the Lamb of God, the perfect fulfiller of law, the true king of Israel." Their presence and their speech was the acknowledgment that this was He whom they had seen from afar; their disappearance proclaims that their work is done when they have pointed to Him. Their presence also teaches us that Jesus is the life of all the living dead. Of these two, one had died, though mystery hung round his death and burial; the other had passed into the heavens by another gate than that of death; and here they both stand with lives undiminished by their mysterious changes, in fulness of power and of consciousness, bathed in glory, which was congruous with them flow. They are witnesses of an immortal life, and proofs that His yet unpierced hands held the keys of life and death. He opened the gate which moves backward to no hand but His, and summoned them; and they come, with no napkins about their heads and no trailing grave-clothes entangling their feet, and own Him as the King of life. They speak too of the eager onward gaze which the Old Testament believers turned to the coming deliverer. In silent anticipation, through all these centuries, good men had lain down to die, saying, "I wait for Thy salvation," and after death their spirits had lived expectant, and crying, like the souls under the altar, "How long, O Lord, how long?" A. M.

**12. And he cried, My father! my father!** Elisha regarded himself as Elijah's specially adopted son, and hence had claimed the "double portion" of the firstborn. That his request was granted showed that the relationship was acknowledged. **The chariot**

**of Israel, and the horsemen thereof**—i.e., the best earthly defence of Israel. "In losing thee," he means, "we lose our great protector—him that is more to us than chariots and horsemen—the strength of Israel, against both domestic and foreign foes." The sight of the fiery chariot and horses may have determined the imagery, but they are not spoken of. P. C.

The only possible farewell of Elisha, the only sign of his reverence and love, was the tender, piercing cry, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." To him Elijah had been a father; to Israel, the simple prophet had been a defence and a glory, more than armies, more than chariots and horses. They are not the phenomena of death that are so wonderful, they are the characteristics of the life that death crowns. So God testified to His servant "not that he was unclothed, but clothed upon—mortality swallowed up of life." So, after the great conflicts and depressions of his life, this great servant of God entered into his rest—"an abundant entrance administered unto him"—the supreme and typical instance of the glorious end of a good and great life. *Allon.*

#### ELISHA'S SUCCESSION. SEARCH FOR BODY OF ELIJAH.

Verses 13-18.

**13, 14.** *The second dividing of the Jordan at the believing appeal of Elisha.* As Elijah was taken up, his mantle—the sign of the prophetic office—fell from him at Elisha's feet. Cast down from the heavens by the hand of God, it was His token of Elisha's full investiture with the commission and work of Elijah. Instantly the intimation is accepted. The youthful prophet, tarrying not to grieve, lifts the mantle and returns to the east bank of the river. And his first *word and act* prove that his prayer for high spiritual gifts, and Elijah's seconding intercession, have been answered. Smiting the waters with the mantle, he cries, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" Though Elijah was removed, he knew that Elijah's God continued His all-controlling presence. The words are a sublime appeal in testimony of this faith. They are uttered in the spirit of the Old Testament saints; based upon God's own naming of Himself as the God of their great fathers. Thus associating Elijah with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he asserts his belief that the Lord had equally distinguished His just ascended servant. And he further affirms his faith in his own Divine commission, and his assurance

that Elijah's God will be his God ; that He will direct, actuate, deliver and succeed *his* appointed work. And this signal faith at the outset continued to the end of his long career. The faith and the prayer met on the instant a Divine response. The Lord God of Elijah again parted the stream, and Elisha's spirit was strengthened as he passed between the retiring waters. B.

**15.** The fifty "sons of the prophets" yonder are watching to see what he will do. It is necessary that they should know that he has received his credentials to act as Elijah's successor. He believes that the power to stay the river lay not in Elijah, but in Elijah's God. He knows no reason why that God may not work with him as well as with another. And therefore he calls upon the Lord. "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" he cries, and lifts the mantle, as Elijah had done, to smite the waters. And lo, for him too they part ; the bed of the river lies bare, and he passes to the other side as dry-shod as before. And the wondering spectators, convinced that the same Divine presence remains on earth which had distinguished the Tishbite's life, exclaim, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha!" *C. E. Smith.*

When God removes one servant, He has another ready to take up his mantle. On the beautiful monument erected to the memory of the brothers Wesley in Westminster Abbey, these words are engraved : "God buries the workers, but He carries on the work." When Moses dies, Joshua is ready to take the leadership. When Elijah is translated, Elisha is so invested with his miraculous might, that the sons of the prophets could see, and say : "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." *W. M. Taylor.*

The mantle that passed from one to the other was the symbol of office and authority transferred ; the functions were the same, while the holders had changed. The sons of the prophets bow before the new master ; "the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha." So the world goes on. Man after man serves his generation by the will of God, and is gathered to his fathers ; and a new arm grasps the mantle to smite Jordan, and a new voice speaks from his empty place, and men recognize the successor, and forget the predecessor. A. M.

*Elijah and Elisha.* In personal character and history there is a marked contrast between Elijah and Elisha. No genealogy is recorded of Elijah, and no human relationship anywhere hinted at. Strong and stern in spirit, with an

unequaled majesty of demeanor and elevation of soul, he stands forth as superior to human tenderness and affection. He represents the God of Sinai, and the predominating spirit of severity that marks His Law. But Elisha is presented to us at the outset as a beloved and loving son, who desires and seeks the parental blessing as he obeys the call of God (1 K. 19 : 19, 20). His life is spent in close contact with men. His spirit, too, is full of human sympathy and interest. And thus he exemplifies the gentler and more gracious temper which predominates in the Gospel. B.

Elisha is distinctly secondary to Elijah. He is in no sense an originator, either of fresh revelations or of new impulses to obedience. He but carries on what Elijah had begun, inherits a work, and is Elijah's Timothy and "son in the faith." The same spirit was on him, though the form of his character and gifts was in strong contrast to the stormier genius of his mightier predecessor. Elisha had no such work as Elijah—no foot-to-foot and hand-to-hand duels with murderous kings or queens ; no single-handed efforts to stop a nation from rushing down a steep place into the sea ; no fiery energy ; no bursts of despair. He moved among kings and courts as an honored guest and trusted counsellor. He did not dwell apart, like Elijah, the strong son of the desert ; but, born in the fertile valley of the Jordan, he lived a life "kindly with his kind," and his delights were with the sons of men. His miracles are mostly works of mercy and gentleness, relieving wants and sicknesses, drying tears and giving back dear ones to mourners. He is as complete a contrast to his stern, solitary, forceful predecessor, as the still small voice was to the roar of the wind or the crackling hiss of the flames. A. M.

*Elisha's reception by the sons of the prophets.* From their view-point near the river, beholding the amazing miracle now performed by Elisha, they saw in it the proof of his Divine appointment to the place of Elijah. To this Spirit of God now resting upon him they did reverence, as they came and bowed before him. And yet their strong love for the grand old prophet asserted itself in

**16-18.** *Their earnest request and fruitless search.* The possible recovery of Elijah's body seems to have been their aim. If God had taken his soul, as they inferred from Elisha's return alone and with Elijah's mantle, they might at least find and honor the prophet's body. They would, at least, be assured that he was beyond this last friendly ministry. To

their continued importunity, when his patience was exhausted, he at last assented; perhaps lest they might draw some unfavorable inference from his denial. On their return to Jericho from a fruitless search on the other side of the Jordan, Elisha merely met their account with the gently reproving reminder that he had not sent them. B.

**17. And they sought him three days, but found him not.** He was gone, no more to be seen by mortal eyes; or, if ever again, only in far-distant ages, when on the summit of "a high mountain, apart by themselves," three disciples, like Elisha, should be gathered round a Master whose departure they were soon expecting; "and there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him." The ascension or assumption of Elijah stands out alone in the Jewish history, as the highest representation of the end of a great and good career; of death as seen under its noblest aspect—as the completion and crown of the life which had preceded it, as the mysterious shrouding of the departed within the invisible world. *Stanley.*

Elijah's work was singularly simple and direct. One idea runs throughout it all. At his first appearance before Ahab at Carmel, at Horeb, in the vineyard of Naboth, in his dealings with the captains of Ahaziah, and at his translation into heaven, he has one truth to enunciate and one lesson to enforce. He is the embodiment of law. He stands in a position wholly different from that of the evangelical prophets of the Old Testament. He is a second Moses. He is the prophet of judgment and of fire. No one could fulfil such a function who was not stern, bold and unflinching even unto death. His dependence was wholly upon God. In every event of his life he looked to Him, and to Him alone, for guidance. He had neither wishes nor purposes of his own. With this simplicity of faith was closely connected singleness of aim. He had one thing to do, to reawaken the religious life of Israel, and to that he directed all his efforts, assured that the final issue must be for the common welfare, and that, if we seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, all things will be added unto us. In this respect, he embodied the essence of the true prophetic spirit; and his character thus possessed all the force which belongs in every age to men who become so possessed by one great cause that for its sake they are ready both to live and die. No one of the old prophets is so frequently mentioned in the New Testament; and his name never occurs except in a con-

nection which testifies to the deep impression that he had made. His memory was cherished with admiration and reverence. The priests and Levites could not comprehend the Baptist's right to baptize unless he was either the Christ, or the great prophet that was to come, or Elijah (John 1:25). Paul refers to an incident in his history to give force to his argument that Israel was not wholly cast away (Rom. 11:2). James sees in him the most striking illustration of the power of prayer (5:17); and our Lord's disciples quote him as one whose deeds afforded a justification of what they were anxious to do to the inhabitants of the village that would not receive their Master (Luke 9:54). It was the rugged sternness and severity of his character which most of all left this impression upon men's minds. They had an instinctive feeling that it had been needed, and that there was no one by whom it had been so strikingly and consistently displayed. Possessed of elements of character like these, Elijah stands out on the page of Old Testament history the grandest and most unique of all its figures except the great law-giver Moses. He was the prophet of fire, and it was most of all, by being so, that he prepared the way for Him who was the Hope at once of Israel and of the world. W. M

#### *Suggestions and Lessons.*

Love remains to the last, thoughtful of the beloved. Like Christ, the Christian loves his own to the end. But not less is he faithful to his Lord, in supreme mindfulness of His glory!

Working on up to the last in the work set before you is the best way to prepare for death—to make the transition a translation!

The prayer that needs neither qualification nor stint is that for gifts of spirit that we need for the Lord's assigned work. We cannot too earnestly covet or aspire after the highest and best of spiritual gifts—wisdom, courage, trust in God and single-souled faithfulness. Of these possessions (which are the elements of spiritual character) only can it be said: *We are what we have*, as well as what we wish for.

Since we are together but a little while at the most, is it not the part of true wisdom, affection and fidelity to impart and to receive all the good that may be communicated and exemplified?

Elijah's words conclusively show that dead saints cannot intercede for living ones. Whatever earthly ministry, if any, pertains to departed believers, the blessed office of intercession ceases with their departure.

*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let*



*my last end be like His!* Elijah's tenderness, affection and fidelity, as well as his serenity in the brief period after the crossing of Jordan, naturally suggest this prayer. So ought Christian love to remain thoughtful of and helpful to its beloved to the last. So ought Christian fidelity to toil on in the service given it to the end. Thus is death best prepared for in loving helpful work for the glory of the Master; thus is the transition made a translation.

In Elijah's translation we see how this life, had it been sinless, might have ended. We learn how "they that remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." We have a glimpse and gleam of the life immortal brought to light in the Gospel. And so, in *his* exaltation, who was a man of like passions as we are, we may well take to heart, by an anticipating faith, the apostle's triumphant challenge: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!*

*What prayer is, and what it does, is nowhere*

more effectively taught and shown than in Elijah's career. What it is—a constant, close, fervid, importunate *asking, seeking and knocking*, in the very presence, at the very heart of God. As shown at Carmel, it is *an address to the personal God* revealed by covenant to Abraham; it is the *asking something definite*; it has a *plea*; comprising two always inseparable things, God's glory and His people's welfare. And *what prayer does*—in the training of his own intrepid faithful spirit; in the marvellous events that followed his prevalent supplication: the shutting and opening of the heavens—restoring the widow's dead child—bringing down the fire upon the prepared sacrifice, and the flame of judgment upon the two companies! And our simple conclusion is, that if one man's prayer wrought such *marvels, every man's prayer*—of like spirit—will assuredly avail to secure God's best blessings of grace and providence freely *promised to all*. And this conclusion, at least, the Apostle James clearly substantiates in his intimation that Elijah was only a man. B.

## Section 17.

REIGN OF JEHORAM, 12 YEARS.

**15th of Jehoshaphat to 8th of Jehoram, of Judah.**

2 KINGS 3 : 1-27.

1 Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth  
2 year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. And he did that which was  
evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother; for he put away  
3 the pillar of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of  
Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.  
4 Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster; and he rendered unto the king of  
5 Israel the wool of an hundred thousand lambs, and of an hundred thousand rams. But it  
came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.  
6, 7 And king Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time, and mustered all Israel. And he  
went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled  
against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up:  
8 I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. And he said, Which  
9 way shall we go up? And he answered, The way of the wilderness of Edom. So the king  
of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they made a circuit of  
seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, nor for the beasts that followed  
10 them. And the king of Israel said, Alas! for the LORD hath called these three kings to-  
11 gether to deliver them into the hand of Moab. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a  
prophet of the LORD, that we may inquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of  
Israel's servants answered and said, Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, which poured water

12 on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the  
 13 king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. And Elisha said  
 unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father,  
 and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the  
 14 LORD hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And  
 Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I  
 regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor  
 15 see thee. But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played,  
 16 that the hand of the LORD came upon him. And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this  
 17 valley full of trenches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see  
 rain, yet that valley shall be filled with water: and ye shall drink, both ye and your cattle  
 18 and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will also de-  
 19 liver the Moabites into your hand. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice  
 city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all fountains of water, and mar every good  
 20 piece of land with stones. And it came to pass in the morning, about the time of offering  
 the oblation, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled  
 21 with water. Now when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against  
 them, they gathered themselves together, all that were able to put on armour, and up-  
 22 ward, and stood on the border. And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone  
 upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water over against them as red as blood: and they  
 23 said, This is blood; the kings are surely destroyed, and they have smitten each man his  
 24 fellow: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil. And when they came to the camp of Israel, the  
 Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: and they went for-  
 25 ward into the land smiting the Moabites. And they beat down the cities; and on every good  
 piece of land they cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the fountains  
 of water, and felled all the good trees: until in Kir-hareseth *only* they left the stones thereof;  
 26 howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it. And when the king of Moab saw that the  
 battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew sword, to break  
 27 through unto the king of Edom; but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that  
 should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And  
 there was great wrath against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their  
 own land.

1-3. Jehoram (abbreviated Joram), the ninth king of Israel, was the son of Ahab and Jezebel, and the successor of his brother Ahaziah. His accession is marked by a twofold date—in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the second year of Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat—that is, the second year of Jehoram's association with his father, Jehoshaphat, in the kingdom. Jehoram of Israel reigned twelve years at Samaria. He maintained a close alliance with Judah, and it was perhaps by the influence of Jehoshaphat that he was a shade better than his father and his brother. P. S.—Jehoram was only half-hearted in his religious changes. He must have personally disapproved of the sensuous Phœnician religion; but he either shrank from carrying out his views to the full for fear of popular disturbances, or he was so far under the influence of the Queen-mother, Jezebel, that he submitted to a compromise, and while publicly condemning the Baal worship, privately connived at its continuance. Elisha's angry words (in verse 13), "Get thee to the prophets of thy father

and to the prophets of thy mother," sufficiently indicate his dissatisfaction with the king's half measures; and the history of Jehu's reformation (2 K. 10: 21-28) shows that the Baal temple, image, and worship all continued to the end of Jehoram's reign, and were not removed until the reign of his successor.

4-27. From religious reforms Jehoram turned his attention to matters political. The revolt of Moab in the reign of his predecessor, and the complete recovery by the Moabites of their independence through a series of successes unchecked by a reverse, constituted a new source of danger to the State, which could not afford the lowering of its prestige consequent upon the brilliant campaign conducted by Mesha. An effort was necessary, if not to recover Moab, at any rate to repair the loss of honor involved in the successful rebellion; and Jehoram, seemingly in his first year, conceived the design of forming a powerful confederation against the triumphant rebels, which should at the least severely chastise them for their audacity. In the first instance he applied to

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who had shown himself well disposed both toward Ahab (1 K. 22 : 4, 29) and toward Ahaziah (*ibid.*, verses 44-49), and solicited his aid, which was willingly granted (verse 7); after which negotiations were entered into with the king of Edom, a semi-independent monarch, and he also was induced to join the league. Edom was at this time growing in power, and probably entertained a covert jealousy of Moab, which was its near neighbor and might be a formidable enemy. The king therefore accepted the third position in the confederacy, and even gave the armies of Israel and Judah passage through his territory, that so they might have the better chance of taking the Moabites by surprise. After traversing the waterless tract west and south of the Dead Sea, the frontier of Moab was approached at a point where a deep torrent bed separated between Moab and Edom. Here it seems to have been supposed that water would be found; but the bed of the stream proved wholly dry, and Jehoram gave way to despair. He was, however, persuaded by Jehoshaphat to make an appeal for aid to the prophet, Elisha, who had accompanied the host; and Elisha, after some contemptuous expressions and a half refusal, was induced to exert his supernatural powers in order to save the army. The host, refreshed in the night by a rush of water down the gully caused by some heavy rain at a distance, was set upon in the morning by the Moabites, who, seeing the ruddy sunrise reflected the pools which the flood had left, imagined that the red liquid was blood, and that the allies had fallen out and fought each other. Their error was fatal to them. Rushing, half armed probably, and in a disorderly crowd, against the Israelite camp, they were met by an enemy who was expecting their onset, repulsed, and routed. A hurried flight followed, and a hot pursuit; great numbers of the Moabites were slain; even the cities afforded little protection, and the land was devastated and ruined. At last the king of Moab stood at bay in Kir-Haraseth, the strongest of his fortresses. Then occurred that horrible scene, the king openly offering his son as a burnt offering upon the wall. Shocked and dismayed at the sight, the besiegers broke up their camp, and returned to their respective countries. Ewald remarks that "had there been a Joab or a David then alive in Israel, such an issue of the campaign would not have been tolerated; but already a worm of inward weakness had begun to gnaw at the national heart and at its confidence in Jehovah. From

that day, however, Moab remained independent; and long ages after, every time that other causes had enfeebled the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, the roving bands from Moab marched across the Jordan on plundering excursions." G. R.

The enormous annual tribute of one hundred thousand fleeces of rams, and as many of lambs, led, after the death of Ahab, to a vigorous revolt, in which Ammon rallied to the support of Moab. This tribute in kind is referred to by Isaiah (Isa. 16 : 1): "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness." A campaign, or rather two campaigns, quickly followed, of which, or of parts of which, we have three distinct records. 2 Kings, chap. 3, recounts the invasion of Moab by the combined armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom. 2 Chronicles, chap. 20, records an invasion of Judah by Moab and her allies, Ammon and Edom. Twenty years ago the discovery of the famous monolith of King Mesha, at Dibon, known as "the Moabite Stone," a unique relic of antiquity, nearly three thousand years old, and not only the sole Moabite inscription, but the earliest existing document in the Hebrew language, older by a hundred and fifty years than any other epigraphic record containing the same species of writing, gave us the story of Moab's struggle with Israel from the side of the former. The Moabite Stone pictures to us the desperate defence of Mesha in his capital, Kir (now Kerak), which the invaders had overrun and destroyed his whole country. But, as we read in verse 27, they retired; and then Mesha, evidently a monarch of great sagacity and vigor, set to work to restore his fortresses, and, pushing beyond the Arnon, wrested again from the unstable grasp of Reuben many of the towns which, originally Moabite, had been seized by Sihon, to be soon conquered by Moses. Henceforward, till the Assyrian invader impartially ravaged both alike, Moab was the aggressor in a border warfare, kept in check only by the growing power of Syria. In the warnings of the prophets we see how bitter was the feud between the children of Lot and of Abraham. But the end soon came; and from the date of the Captivity the kingdom of Mesha disappears from history, and Moab itself has remained but a geographical expression. *Tristram.*

The points established by the Moabite inscription are: 1. That Moab recovered from the blow dealt by David (2 Sam. 8 : 2, 12), and became again an independent state in the interval between David's conquest and the ac-

cession of Omri. 2. That Omri reconquered the country, and that it then became subject to the northern kingdom, and remained so throughout his reign and that of his son Ahab, and into the reign of Ahab's son and successor, Ahaziah. 3. That the independence was regained by means of a war, in which Mesha took town after town from the Israelites, including in his conquests many of the towns which, at the original occupation of the Holy Land, had passed into the possession of the Reubenites or the Gadites, as Baal-Meon (Num. 32 : 38), Kirjathaim (*ibid.* 37), Ataroth (*ibid.* 34), Nebo (*ibid.* 38), Jahaz (Josh. 13 : 18), etc. 4. That the name of Jehovah was well known to the Moabites as that of the God of the Israelites. 5. That there was a sanctuary of Jehovah at Nebo, in the trans-Jordanic territory.

**8. The way through the wilderness of Edom.** That is, round the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, and across the Arabah, or continuation of the Jordan and Dead Sea valley. This route led to the Edomite country which extended along the eastern side of the Arabah and bordered on Moab toward the south, where its desert (*midbar*) was divided from that of Moab by the Wady-Kurahy or El Absy. One object of taking this route was most likely to effect a junction with the forces of Edom, which had resumed its dependence on Judah, though the year before it had been in alliance with Moab. (See 2 Chron. 20 : 22.) Another may have been, to come upon the Moabites unprepared. This line of march was followed on more than one occasion by the Crusaders, who maintained fortresses in the Moabite country. B. C.

**10.** God had not "called the three kings together;" they had come together of their own accord, guided by their own views of earthly policy. Yet God was not about to "deliver them into the hands of Moab," as in strict justice He might have done. He was about to deliver the three kings from their peril.

**11.** The Israelite monarch despairs at once; the Jewish monarch retains faith and hope. Undoubtedly he ought to have had inquiry made of the Lord *before* he consented to accompany Jehoram on the expedition. But one neglect of duty does not justify persistence in neglect. This he sees, and therefore suggests that even now, at the eleventh hour, the right course shall be taken. Apparently Jehoram was not aware of Elisha's presence with the army. He had to be enlightened by one of his attendants, who happened to be acquainted with the fact.

We may suppose that Elisha had joined the army "at the instigation of the Spirit of God" (*Keil*), God having resolved to rescue the Israelites from their peril by His instrumentality, and at the same time to show forth His glory before the people of Moab.

**12.** Prophets were commonly summoned into the king's presence, or, if they had a message to him, contrived a meeting in some place where they knew he would be. That the kings should seek Elisha out and visit him was a great sign both of the honor in which he was held, and also of the extent to which they were humbled by the danger which threatened them. *Hammond.*

**13. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel.** Jehoram's present humility does not save him from rebuke. He is of the accursed stock, and lies himself under a special curse; since all the evil threatened against Ahab was to come to pass in "his son's days" (1 K. 21 : 29). Moreover, his reformation (see verse 2) had been but a half reformation—a compromise with idolatry. Not only had the calf worship been retained, but the Baal worship itself, though disestablished, had been allowed to continue and was in favor with the queen-mother, and probably with a portion of the court. B. C.

**15.** The power of music in particular—the concord of sweet sounds—to soothe the brain, to calm the nerves and elevate the soul, is well known. The noblest passages in "Paradise Lost" were composed as Milton's daughter played to her father on the organ. We all remember how David's harp chased away the evil spirit from Saul. The father of medicine himself, *Æsculapius*, appears in ancient history as healing diseases with songs. The philosopher Pythagoras quieted the troubles of his mind with the lyre. *T. H. Howat.*—As David's harping refreshed Saul and tranquilized his spirit, so the playing of any skilled minstrel had a soothing effect on those possessing the prophetic gift generally, and enabled them to shut out the outer world, and concentrate their whole attention on the inward voice which communicated to them the Divine messages.

**17.** Wind and rain usually go together in the East, especially when there is sudden heavy rain after a time of drought. What Elisha promises is a heavy storm of wind accompanied by violent rain, which, however, will be at such a distance that the Israelites will see nothing of it, but whereof they will experience the effects when the torrent-course that separates them

from the Moabite country suddenly becomes a rushing stream as the rain flows off down it. Their "pits," or trenches, will retain a portion of the water, and furnish them with a sufficient supply for their wants. It was necessary that the storm should be distant, that the Moabites might know nothing of it, and so fall under the delusion (verse 28) which led to their complete defeat.

**20. Behold, there came water by the way of Edom.** The Wady-el-Ahsy drains a portion of Southern Moab, and also a considerable tract of Northern Edom. The nocturnal storm had burst, not in the Moabite country, where it would have attracted the attention of the Moabites, but in some comparatively distant part of the Idumean territory, so that the Moabites were not aware of it. *Hammond.*

**20-24.** We have here the Divine gift of both those things which God had promised by Elisha—water and victory; and the former not only a pledge of the latter, but a means of it. God, who created and commands all the waters both above and beneath the firmament, sent them an abundance of water on a sudden, which did them double service. H.

**23. This is blood.** The pits, deep but with small mouths, gleaming redly through the haze which would lie along the newly moistened valley, seemed to the Moabites like pools of blood. They caught at the idea, probably, the more readily from a recollection of their own disaster the preceding year, when they and their allies had mutually destroyed each other (2 Chron. 20:28). It seemed to them, from their knowledge of the jealousies subsisting between Judah, Israel, and Edom, not unlikely that a similar calamity had now befallen their foes.

**25. Only in Kir-Haraseth.** Kir-Haraseth, called also Kir-Hareseth (Isa. 16:7), Kir-Harash (*ibid* 11), and Kir-Moab (*ibid* 15:1), is identified almost certainly with the modern Kerak, a strong city on the highland immediately east of the southern part of the Dead Sea.

It was the great fortress of Moab, though not the capital, which was Rabbath or Rabbah. B. C.

**25-27.** The victory was followed up by an exterminating war. The cities of Moab were razed, and their stones thrown into the corn-fields; the wells were filled, and the fruit-trees were cut down. The only refuge left was the city of Kir-Haraseth; and even this was on the point of being taken by storm, when the king of Moab, with seven hundred chosen warriors, tried to cut his way through to reach the king of Edom, but he was driven back into the city. He resorted to the forlorn hope of his horrid superstition. Mounting the wall, in sight of the besiegers, he offered his eldest son and heir as a burnt offering to Moloch. It would seem that this act of despair roused the sympathy of the Edomites, as well as the horror of Jehoshaphat: "There was great indignation against Israel; and they departed from him, and returned to their own land;" and the next we hear of the relations between the allies is the revolt of Edom from the king of Judah. To Elisha's aid in this war may probably be ascribed those friendly relations between Jehoram and the prophet which belong to the history of the latter. Indeed the deeds of Elisha filled the greater part of the annals of Israel under Jehoram. P. S.

Elisha was a prophet of the Gospel, as Elijah had been a prophet of the Law. Yet, as the Law is in the Gospel, and the Gospel was in the Law, so Elisha could sometimes denounce God's judgment, and Elijah yearn for and delight in His mercy. The story of the three kings and their invasion of Moab discloses Elisha in both aspects—severe toward the king of Israel, but gentle and helpful to the king of Judah. And such is the true character of the Gospel, and the genuine spirit of its teachers and confessors. Always accessible with its precious truths and promises, and always helpful with its wise counsels and sufficient grace, yet always boldly and sternly outspoken when fidelity to truth and righteousness demand. B.

## Section 18.

## SIX NOTED MIRACULOUS ACTS OF ELISHA.

2 KINGS 2 : 19-25 ; 4 : 1-44 ; 6 : 1-7.

It is evidently the object of the writer or compiler of 2 Kings to collect in this place the principal, or at any rate the most noted, of the miraculous acts of the great prophet who succeeded Elijah, and so to preserve them from oblivion. This object, which he began to set before himself in chap. 2 : 18, is pursued in chaps. 4 and 6. *Hammond*.—These six miracles are here set together, not merely to secure unity and order in the arrangement of sections, but also to classify this group of similar topics, and to facilitate their comparative study. B.

## MIRACLE OF HELP AT JERICHO.

2 Kings 2 : 19-22.

19 And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, we pray thee, the situation of this city  
20 is pleasant, as my lord seeth : but the water is naught, and the land miscarrieth. And he  
21 said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he  
went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast salt therein, and said, Thus saith the LORD,  
I have healed these waters ; there shall not be from thence any more death or miscarrying.  
22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spake.

**19-22.** *A miracle of mercy to Jericho.* Although this city had been rebuilt in the face of a Divine curse (which was fulfilled upon the builder) yet no order for its demolition followed. There were now good men living in it. Not only the sons of the prophets, but it would seem the chief men of the city, recognized Jehovah in the person of His prophet. Faith in His power must have helped to prompt this prayer to Elisha for the removal of their chief trouble. Their personal comfort and the productiveness of the neighboring country depended upon the purity of the spring which has ever been the one source of supply to Jericho. "The city is pleasant," they said, "but the water is bad and the soil barren."

On Elisha's part there is no hesitation or delay. The opportunity is used to signalize God's mercy in answer to their call. The occasion is furnished to further confirm and establish Elisha's prophetic mission among the people. And the means employed help this confirmation as they make the miracle more conspicuously God's work. At the spring-head of the waters Elisha cast in a bowl full of salt. This was indeed a *symbol of purifying power*. But its only *natural* effect was to increase the brackishness of the waters, and the unproductiveness of the ground. Well did the people know this, living so near the salt Dead Sea, and familiar with its desolating waters. Yet "the waters

were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha." And this spring, the only one in the neighborhood, still exists ; and its pleasant waters extend over the whole plain of Jericho. B.

The situation of Jericho is indeed pleasant, as its inhabitants observed to Elisha. And to this day it deserves the epithet. It has been called a diamond in the desert ; for it pushes forward from under the steep mountain range of the central hills of Palestine, which shelter it, into the dreary gypsum-strewn Ghor or Plain of Jordan—a bright green gem in a wide setting of desert. A square of two or three miles in extent each way is one luxuriant mass of exuberant verdure ; and this is all due to the live-giving streamlets that are carefully led in every direction from Ain es Sultân, "the prophet's fountain." Many copious fountains spring from the base of the mountains near the lower Jordan and the Dead Sea. But, with two or three exceptions, all are salt or brackish.

**19. The water is naught.** The cause for this is not far to seek. The upper strata of the plain are saturated with various salts and with sulphur, and often crusted with gypsum. After a rainstorm has washed the ground, I have often seen the surface coated with an efflorescence of thin minerals of a yellowish-white color. No wonder, then, that the water percolating through such a soil should become

impregnated with salts. The two remarkable exceptions are the giant fountains of Ain Dûk and Ain es Sultân. But Ain Dûk is more than three miles northwest of Jericho, immediately under the mountains, here most precipitous, and is doubtless fed by their drainage without coming in contact with the lower deposits. Not so Ain es Sultân, "the prophet's fountain." It bursts up, a stream full grown at birth, at the foot of an insignificant rocky mound, only a few feet high, in the middle of the plain. Its very position seems to attest the reality of the miraculous healing; for by all analogy it should be salt. The tradition of the beneficent wonder-working prophet still lingers on the spot. It has always struck me that the very existence of this marvellous spring is in itself a witness of the miracle. But how came a place without good water to be a city of such importance in the Canaanitish days, before the conquest by Joshua? Careful research explains this; for there are many traces of ancient aqueducts which brought down to the plain the sweet waters of Ain Dûk, and also those of the Wady Kelt (the valley of Achor), a little to the south of it. These aqueducts were, of course, destroyed by Joshua when he razed Jericho to the ground. Long after, when Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho (1 K. 16: 34), he did not reconstruct the aqueduct, and the inhabitants were dependent on the brackish waters of their own fountain, excepting for the small supply they might carry from a distance. *Tristram.*

**20.** The "new cruse" and the "salt" are evidently chosen from a regard to symbolism. The foul stream represents sin, and to cleanse it emblems of purity must be taken. Hence the clean "new" dish, previously unused, and thus untainted; and the salt, naturally very unapt to heal an unwholesome stream, which generally holds too much salt in solution, but a common scriptural symbol of incorruption. B. C.

**20-22.** The cruse and the salt must be their own; the act must be his; the power, God's; he cast the salt into the spring and said, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barrenness." Far was it from Elisha to challenge aught to himself. How careful is the man of God that Jericho shall know to whom they owe the blessing, that they may duly return the thanks! Elisha professes he can do no more of himself than that salt, than that cruse: only God shall work by him, by it; and whatever that Almighty hand undertakes

cannot fail, yea is already done. Neither doth he say, "I will heal," but "I have healed." Even so, O God, if Thou cast into the fountain of our hearts but one cruseful of the salt of Thy Spirit we are whole; no thought can pass between the receipt and the remedy. *Bp. H.*

*The effect of the cure.* There was not to be from thence (the spring) any more death or barrenness. The result of Elisha's word was that "the waters were healed unto this day." "Down to the present hour all travellers to Palestine—Robinson, Dean Stanley, Professor Porter—speak in glowing terms of the cool, sweet, and pleasant waters of the 'Fountain of Elisha.' The soil is extensively cultivated. Sugar-yielding canes are plentiful. Fig-trees abound on all sides." All which things may again be interpreted as a parable. The Gospel is the new cruse, and in it is the healing salt—the word of truth—which, cast into the diseased spring of the human heart, heals and purifies its waters; yet is the effect not wrought by the natural action of the truth apart from the Divine and omnipotent operation of the Holy Spirit, who works through human means yet is Himself the efficient Agent in all conversion. The work is of God, and the effects are incalculable. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5: 17). The most marvellous influence is exerted by Christianity on the spring, not only of private, but of public and social life; and State as well as Church is blessed. Christianity is the salvation of peoples—the source of true national as well as of individual well-being. J. O.—Out of the heart are the issues of life. Into the heart, the fountain of evil, is to be put that grace of God which alone can give healing to the soul, sweetness and fruitfulness to the life. When God thus quickens the spirit there is no more death or barrenness. B.

How striking an image is this rebuilt city, with its unhealed spring, of godless civilizations, founded on self-will and defiance of God's counsel, often stately and imposing, yet ending in vanity, because no means exist to cure the spring of the corrupt human heart! "Of republican Athens, of imperial Rome, it might well be said, 'The city was pleasant.' In both there was learning, genius, high civilization, the cultivation of the fine arts to an extent that has made the Elgin marbles, for example, the wonder of the world. But 'the water was naught, and the ground was barren,' because there was the absence of true religion. No country whatever can in the highest sense prosper without it." *T. H. Howat.*—Politics,

literature, art, science, material civilization, will dwindle and decay unless a pure stream can be made to flow from the people's heart; for "out of it are the issues of life." J. O.

The men of Jericho believed the prophet of God, and in response to their believing request,

received God's blessing. The men of Bethel scoffed, and God returned to them the judgment of the scoffer. So is the same message of God from the lips of the Gospel preacher a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, as it is believed or rejected. B.

#### MIRACLE OF JUDGMENT AT BETHEL.

2 Kings 2 : 23-25.

23 And he went up from thence unto Beth-el; and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children (or, *young lads*) out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he looked behind him and saw them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, 25 and tare forty and two children of them. And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

23, 24. *A miracle of judgment at Bethel.* This was one of the chief centres of idolatrous worship. Here also was the leading school of God's prophets, whereby alone the interests of pure religion were preserved in Israel. But the mass of the people were wholly given up to their false and iniquitous worship. Under this influence their children were trained as scoffers at the true God and His prophets. It was the natural result of this training that led a number of these children (rather, *young men*) to go forth on Elisha's coming and shout their impious mockery. They expressed the spirit of the parents, who rejoiced to be rid of Elijah, and would have Elisha also taken out of their way. Hence the cry, *Go up*, and the insulting epithet, *thou bald head!* The curse of Elisha which followed was spoken under a Divine impulse. As in the miracle of mercy at Jericho it was the Lord who inspired Elisha's act and words, so here it is the Lord who puts the impulse to curse in the prophet's heart. And it is the Lord who Himself carries out His appointed doom. He who elsewhere uses fire, flood, pestilence, or famine as instruments of His judgments, here summons savage beasts to destroy these impious mockers. Mocking the Lord's messengers and misusing His prophets are specifically referred to among the crying sins of Israel (2 Chron. 36 : 16; see also Lev. 24 : 21, 22). And this offence was aggravated here by the blasphemous allusion to God's translation of Elijah. Richly deserved, therefore, was this terrible punishment by these youthful mockers. Through them its effects reached to their parents, while it conveyed to the whole nation a fearful warning against impiety. It foreshadowed the doom that would surely follow God's unheeded patience and long-suffering.

And it furnished a needed authentication of Elisha's Divine mission as the successor of Elijah. It is to be noted that this miracle of judgment and the leprosy pronounced on Gehazi are the exceptions among the many wonders performed in connection with Elisha's whole ministry. All the rest were miracles of mercy. This one instance in a long life of helpful beneficence shows, as the Incarnate Master of Elisha clearly intimated, that love may flash with the spirit of judgment and wield the power of doom. B.

The prophet Elisha, ridiculed by a band of children in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, denounces against them the malediction of God; immediately forty-two of them are torn by bears that rush forth out of the forest. This event occurs at Bethel, the chief seat of idolatry in the kingdom of Israel. The taunts uttered by these children against the prophet of Jehovah were, consequently, an outrage against Jehovah Himself. Their sarcasm is even carried to blasphemy; for when they cry after Elisha, "Go up, thou bald head!" they sneer at the ascension of Elijah, which, as Elisha had declared, had recently taken place; and they urge the servant to follow, if he can, his master into heaven. The immediate punishment of these children was destined to warn the entire nation of Samaria of the total ruin which so much impiety was about to bring upon it. *Godet.*

This shocking impiety toward the God of the holy prophets; this inexpressibly awful hardihood in joking thus upon the chariot and horses of fire which swept Elijah up to heaven—what shall we say or think of it? We are not surprised that a Divine impulse moved Elisha to curse them, and that God made them



examples of swift and terrible retribution. H. C.—The offence, involving as it did a blasphemous insult upon one of the Lord's most signal acts, made a near approach to what in the New Testament is called the sin against the Holy Ghost. It became the Lord to vindicate His own honor among a people governed by sensible dispensations of judgments and of mercy; and it became Him to vindicate the character and authority of His anointed prophet at the outset of his high career. *Kitto*.—O fearful example of Divine justice! This was not the revenge of an angry prophet: it was the punishment of a righteous Judge. God and His seer look through these children, at the parents, at all Israel. He would punish the parents' misnurturing their children to the contemptuous usage of a prophet, with the death of those children whom they had mistaught; He would teach Israel what it was to misuse a prophet; and if He would not endure these contumelies unrevenged in the mouths of children, what vengeance was enough for aged persecutors? *Bp. H.*

I take this story as teaching us what I think we very much need to be taught—viz., that the faults of our youth, and those which are most natural to us at that age, are not considered by God as trifling. . . . You may hear grown-up people talk in a laughing manner of the faults which they committed at school, of their idleness, and their various acts of mischief, and worse than mischief. And when boys hear this, it naturally makes them think it really does not matter much whether they behave well or ill—they are just as likely to be respectable and amiable men hereafter. . . . Men measure faults by the harm which they do in this world, and not by the harm which they do in unfitting us for the kingdom of God by making us unlike God and Christ. *T. Arnold.*

Children will ordinarily tread in the steps of their parents. In their hearts is reproduced the spirit that rules in the household, either of reverence or of impiety. Hence the fearful responsibility of parents.

No thought concerning God's character and dealing is more impressive than this—*His patience and long-suffering!* Everywhere in the history it meets us. Here and there only, as in the doom of the priests of Baal and the children of Bethel, we read of His "strange work" of judgment! But even these would have been withheld, if His very mercy to the nation had not *required* them. They must be warned in a way that they could recognize and feel. How ought this sublime thought of God's amazing patience to exalt our estimate of His character, and to draw us nearer to His heart of love and mercy! Yet we know that God's patience has a limit with every soul. If His long-suffering, active mercy be persistently unheeded, it will at length give place to His wrath. *He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy!* B.

**25.** *From Bethel Elisha goes to Carmel and returns to Samaria.* He remains for a time at Mount Carmel, where he had lived with Elijah. Here he retired at this early period of his ministry—and, we infer, frequently afterward—to recall previous impressions, and to receive fresh and deeper Divine influences from quiet communion with God. He subsequently took up his residence at Samaria until his death. Unlike Elijah, he lived in close and constant association with the people. His ministry was performed in view of the court and the nation. B.—Elisha does not imitate the seclusion of his master. He "prefers from the first the companionship of men," fixes his home in the capital of his country, Samaria; is a friendly counsellor of the king and highly honored by him; his whole life, indeed, is, compared with that of Elijah, one of ease and tranquillity. But, though living "in the world," he is not "of the world." As Ewald says, "In spite of all the seductions to which he was abundantly exposed through the great consideration in which he was held, he retained at every period of his life the true prophetic simplicity and purity, and contempt for worldly wealth and advantages." *Hammond.*

#### MIRACULOUS SUPPLY OF THE WIDOW'S NEED.

2 Kings 4 : 1-7.

- 1 Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead: and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the
- 2 LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two children to be bondmen. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me; what hast thou in the house? And
- 3 she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few.

4 And thou shalt go in, and shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and pour out into all  
 5 those vessels ; and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut  
 the door upon her and upon her sons ; they brought *the vessels* to her, and she poured out.  
 6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a  
 7 vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she  
 came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live  
 thou and thy sons of the rest.

*The widow's oil increased.* This simple and touching story is one of those many narratives which make the Bible a book for every one, and a book for every-day life. The individual is never lost in the nation or the race. The Bible is partly a history of nations, and particularly of the Jewish nation. But it is much more a history of individuals. It is this that makes it such a book of universal comfort and instruction. As we read of the men and women whose lives are recorded in it, we learn more from their faith and their failings, from their temptations and their victories, than we could from any abstract discourses about the benefit of virtue and the evil of vice. We learn that they were men and women of like passions with ourselves. We learn that the temptations they conquered we can conquer by the help of the same Spirit ; that the trials they endured we can endure ; and that the faith and holiness to which they attained are within our reach also. Perhaps we think it hard to be religious in our business, in society, or amid the cares and worries of our daily life. The Bible shows us men and women living under the same conditions, and yet living so much in the fear of God and the presence of eternity that they triumphed over their distractions, and, while in the world, were not of it. Such a glimpse of every-day life we obtain in the narrative before us. C. H. I.

This whole section reveals Elisha's sympathy and helpfulness, while it conveys Gospel precepts bearing upon practical human conduct. The miracles it narrates, like all the miracles of the Old and New Testaments, were for use and instruction, not to produce mere wonderment.

1. *The request of faith under circumstances of strait and distress.* A woman (probably of Samaria, where Elisha lived) is the suppliant—a widow of an humble but godly teacher. The husband had been one of a small class of instructed and devout men, trained in the religious schools founded by Samuel and continued under succeeding prophets. Either as youths or men, and under an impulse of the Divine Spirit, they voluntarily entered these sacred seminaries. But, whether as students

or as graduated evangelists, unmarried or married, each one, like Paul, had an occupation by which he maintained himself or his household. This man had left a debt as his only legacy. How incurred we know not, but not, certainly, from evil or blameworthy conduct. By the laws of all ancient nations children were counted as the property of the parent, and so reckoned among his assets, wherewith his debts could be paid. The Jewish law empowered the creditor to hold a deceased creditor's children as bondsmen for seven years. What dues could not be paid in money, it required to be paid in such enforced service. This law was about to be applied to the two sons of this poor widow. She had no resource but her trust in God. This trust she shows by going at once to God's acknowledged prophet. She knows that Elisha is favored with Divine gifts for God's people. Her husband was God's servant, and his household is consecrated to God. And this is the ground of her appeal in her great strait and distress. Of God's favor she seeks to be availed at the hand of His prophet. B.

**Of the wives of the sons of the prophets.** We learn from this that the "sons of the prophets" were not merely, all of them, college students, but included fathers of families, who cannot have lived a cloistered life, but must have had separate homes for themselves and their families. Such persons may still have taught in the prophetic schools, as do the married tutors and professors of modern universities. **The creditor is come to take my two sons to be bondmen.** In primitive communities men borrowed upon their personal credit, and the primary security for debt was regarded as being their own persons, the value of their labor, and that of those dependent on them. In Greece and Rome, originally, as in the Hebrew community, borrowers ordinarily raised money by pledging their persons, and, if they could not pay when the debt became due, went into servitude with their children. The Mosaic law presupposes this state of things, and permits its continuance, but in two respects interferes to modify it : by requiring that the service exacted shall not be severe (Lev. 25 : 48,

46), but such as was commonly rendered by hired servants (verses 39, 40); and by limiting the period of service to the date of the next jubilee year (verses 40, 41). In the instance brought here under our notice, it would seem that the creditor had not proceeded to claim his rights until the debtor died, when he enforced them against the man's children. *Hammond*.

2-4. *The answer of Elisha*. Instantly he recognizes and responds to her faith. He acknowledges her claim, and at once proceeds to satisfy the appeal of her need. A little before he had sternly repulsed the king, Jehoram, in the midst of his royal allies and their combined hosts, with the question, *What have I to do with thee?* But now with tenderest sympathy he asks this lone and lowly widow, *What shall I do for thee?* The question expressed his willingness to supply her want from resources (not his own) which he could draw upon by a signal and assured faith. Yet he seeks full information before he acts. By a second question he brings out the completeness of her destitution, and discovers a way by which *she* also can be called upon to *do something* in self-help. Thus her faith and obedience will be tested by being called into action. So (in a previous chapter) he had bidden the thirsting army dig ditches for the promised water. And so Christ and His apostles always summoned those they were about to help to *some act or some expectation by which faith might be awakened, encouraged or tested*. This law of all Divine help, that man must in some way co-operate with God by desire, will, or deed, is expressed in its highest form by Paul in Phil. 2:12, 18. *A little oil in a pitcher*: this is her sole remaining treasure. Assured that God will multiply this at his intercession, Elisha bids the woman borrow as many empty vessels as she could from families that know her—*i.e.*, of the sons of the prophets. Then he directs her, with the door closed upon herself and her two sons, to pour from the small half-empty pitcher into them all, until they are filled. B.

2. None can so freely compassionate the hard terms of a prophet as an Elisha. He finds that she is not querulously impatient; expressing her sorrow without murmuring and discontentment; making a loving and honorable mention of that husband who had left her distressed; readily, therefore, doth he incline to her succor: "What shall I do for thee? Tell me what hast thou in the house?" *Bp. H.*—God's help takes its starting-point from what we already have. The widow had but "one

pot of oil," but this was made the basis of what was to be done. So Elijah founded his miracle on the widow of Zarephath's "handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse." The lesson is that what means of help we have are to be made use of to the utmost before supernatural aid is invoked. J. O.

5, 6. *The obedience of faith and its result*. She did what she *could* and what was *commanded*. Neither the strangeness of the command nor the seeming impossibility of the asserted consequences delayed her acting. Nor for a moment did her faith waver while gathering the vessels or filling them one by one from her own small pitcher. When her obedience was fully rewarded and no empty vessel remained, then the supply ceased, *but only with the pouring*. And now God had greatly enriched her. Used as the olive oil was for food, for light, for various ceremonials, its value was permanent and great. And it could always be readily exchanged for money. B.

Divine love is an eternal fountain that never leaves running while a vessel is empty or capable of holding more; and it stands open to all comers: therefore, come; and if ye have not sufficient of your own, go and borrow vessels, empty vessels, not a few; "pay your debts out of it, and live on the rest" to eternity. *Elisha Coles*.—Our faith, our earnestness of desire, our ardor and confidence of prayer, our faithfulness of stewardship and strenuousness of use, measure the amount of the unmeasured grace which we can receive. So long as our vessels are brought, the golden oil does not cease to flow. The more we trust, the more we can contain of His gift, and the more we can contain, the more shall surely possess. As Bernard beautifully says, "He puts the oil of His mercy into the vase of our trust," and the larger the vase the fuller the stream which He pours into it. As long as we bring vessels, the blessing runs, like the oil into the widow's cruse. When we cease to hold up our emptiness to the fountain, it stays. "Ye have not, because ye ask not." If our Christian life be shrunken, and our graces feeble, it is only because we have not gone to Him for fresh supplies. Little faith means little grace. . . . The principle of the variation in actual manifestation of the unvarying might of God is found in the Lord's words: "According to your faith be it unto you." So, then, we may expect periods of quickened energy in the forth-putting of the Divine power. And these will correspond to and be consequent on the faithful prayers of Christian men. See to it

that you keep the channels clear, that the flow may continue full and increase. A. M.

We see here how exactly the oil matches the capacity and number of the vessels provided. According to the provision made, so was the miraculous gift. This shows us the law of God's dealing with men's souls. He gives grace, but He gives it in measure. He gives grace as much as man is ready to receive; but He requires man to prepare vessels to receive the grace He gives, and to use and not "leave of it." The oil was given to be used; so is Divine grace. If we use what God gives and value it, he who gathers much shall have nothing over, and he who gathers little shall have no lack. *Baring-Gould*.—As the widow's oil increased, not in the vessel, but by pouring out; and as the barley bread in the Gospel multiplied, not in the whole loaf, but by *breaking* and *distributing*; and as the grain bringeth increase, not when it lieth on a heap in the garner, but by scattering upon the land; so are these spiritual graces best improved, not by keeping them together, but by distributing them abroad. The talent gathereth nothing in the napkin, unless it be rust and canker; but travelling in the bank, besides the good it doth as it passeth to and fro, it ever returneth home with increase. *Sanderson*.

No way to honor God, no way to win souls, no way to increase your own gifts and graces, but to exercise them for the good of others. Grace is not like to worldly vanities that diminish by distribution, but like candles which keep the same light, though a thousand are lighted by them. Grace is like the widow's oil, which multiplied by pouring out; and like those talents which doubled by employment. *T. Brooks*.

7. *Gratitude expressed and counsel sought. The large deliverance.* In few but fervent words "she told the man of God." And he, who saw her feeling of gratitude and of stewardship, told her first how to discharge her stewardship by full honest payment of her husband's debt. Then he intensified and made permanent her grateful sense of God's mercy, by bidding her and her children *live* of the remainder of His bounty. Thus she received more than she had *asked*, even all that she *needed*. And a better gift God added in the greatly quickened and strengthened graces of her spiritual life. As the thought has been expressed of Christ: He laid large foundations for the future Church in the great numbers of those whose faith was wrought or strengthened in connection with His beneficent miracles. B.

I do not see her run forth into the street and proclaim her store; nor calling in her neighbors, whether to admire or bargain. I see her running to the prophet's door and gratefully acknowledging the favor, and humbly depending on his directions; as not daring to dispose of that which was so wondrously given her without the advice of him by whose powerful means she had received it. *Bp. H.*

The element of miracle here is very notable. But the pledge of Divine help in distress implied in such a miracle remains to us, and God will honor every draft on His promises made by faith, basing itself on such deeds as this. It might almost be said that there is a multiplying power in the Divine blessing apart from miracle. The whole incident teaches us the lesson of trusting God in every time of need. When have the righteous been forsaken, or their seed seen begging bread (Ps. 37:25)? If we can trust in God for temporal supplies, much more may we for our spiritual supplies (Phil. 4:19). J. O.—Let those who are poor and in distress be encouraged to trust God for supply in the way of duty. "Verily thou shalt be fed," but not feasted. It is true we cannot now expect miracles, yet we may expect mercies if we wait on God and seek Him. Let widows particularly, and prophets' widows in a special manner, depend upon Him to preserve them and their fatherless children alive; for to them He will be a Husband and a Father. Let those whom God hath blessed with plenty use it for the glory of God, and under the direction of His Word; let them do justly with it, as this widow did, and serve God cheerfully in the use of it; and, as Elisha, be ready to do good to those that need them—be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. H.

*Rich suggestions of Gospel truth, precept and promise* abound in this and the succeeding miracles, each of which is only an acted parable. In this one we find *many golden texts*.

1. "Be care-full (or anxious) for nothing, but in *everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, *make known your requests unto God.*" "Casting all your care upon Him." And by abundant similar invitations are we encouraged to take our trouble, whatever it be, to God—in Him to find assured relief.

2. "What shall *I do for thee,*" is the question of all true Christian helpfulness. Coming from the heart, it is always seconded by the hand in appropriate deeds or gifts. Genuine sympathy is active, expressing itself in earnest intercession with the Divine Helper if it can do no more.

8. He who supplied Israel in the desert with bread from heaven and water from the rock, who multiplied the meal and oil for two poor widows, still "giveth all their meat in due season." And by the same Divine power out of the same infinite resources, though now through the familiar miracle of fruitage from the warmed and moistened earth.

4. Not only in "man's extremity" does God find His "opportunity." The promise that "the Lord will provide" equally applies and needs to be realized by men in their times of fulness. It were well if *then* too they found opportunity for grateful looking and resting upon God.

5. *Borrow not a few vessels!* Large expectation brings abundant provision. Large asking is the condition, as it has the promise, of bountiful supply. And it honors God's royalty in giving. He gives *exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think!*

6. In His providence and grace alike *we are workers together with God.* The increase of what we have comes not without our own act concurring with His interposition. By the *woman's pouring* the vessels were filled. So are we bidden to "work out our own salvation," if we would have "God work in us" all precious results of holy character and happy experience.

7. *Render unto all their dues: owe no man anything.* Honor, in its high, true sense, as well as conscience, accepts this Gospel law. In a just and lofty meaning of the terms, it is true that honesty is the best policy. Even the poor must be honest and pay their debts—poor men, poor ministers, and poor churches. The daily bread we ask of God must be honestly ours, or our prayer is a mockery and is unheard of Him.

8. Grace, like the widow's oil, is the supernatural free gift of God, and avails to pay all the soul's debt. More even than this, it provides for every spiritual need of this life; beautifying, nourishing, healing the soul, and lighting its pathway until it enters into glory. And, according to the Divine assurances, "God is able to make all grace abound." Add now the entire expression of the Holy Ghost, and learn the *reason* of this abounding grace given: *that it may be used for the glory of God.* No word even of Paul surpasses this wonderful succession of unlimited superlatives. None is fraught with deeper, richer meaning of promise and counsel concerning the abundance and the right use of grace. Read thoughtfully and ponder each word of this royal cumulative utterance of the Divine Spirit: *God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work!* B.

#### THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON RESTORED TO LIFE.

2 Kings 4 : 8-37.

8 And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in  
9 thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an  
10 holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make, I pray thee, a little  
chamber on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a  
11 candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. And it  
12 fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber and lay there. And he  
said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood  
13 before him. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for  
us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king,  
14 or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. And  
he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no son,  
15 and her husband is old. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood  
16 in the door. And he said, At this season, when the time cometh round, thou shalt embrace  
17 a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. And  
the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season, when the time came round, as Elisha  
18 had said unto her. And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his  
19 father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to his  
20 servant, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his  
21 mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. And she went up, and laid him on the  
22 bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* upon him, and went out. And she called unto her  
husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the servants, and one of the asses, that I

23 may run to the man of God, and come again. And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him  
 24 to-day ? it is neither new moon nor sabbath. And she said, It shall be well. Then she  
 saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward ; slacken me not the riding,  
 25 except I bid thee. So she went, and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it  
 came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant,  
 26 Behold, yonder is the Shunammite : run, I pray thee, now to meet her, and say unto her, Is  
 27 it well with thee ? is it well with thy husband ? is it well with the child ? And she  
 answered, It is well. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of  
 his feet. And Gehazi came near to thrust her away ; but the man of God said, Let her  
 alone : for her soul is vexed within her ; and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not  
 28 told me. Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord ? did I not say, Do not deceive me ?  
 29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy  
 way : if thou meet any man, salute him not ; and if any salute thee, answer him not again :  
 30 and lay my staff upon the face of the child. And the mother of the child said, As the LORD  
 31 liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her. And  
 Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child ; but there was  
 neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he returned to meet him, and told him, saying, The  
 32 child is not awaked. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead,  
 33 and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed  
 34 unto the LORD. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth,  
 and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands : and he stretched himself upon  
 35 him ; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house  
 once to and fro ; and went up, and stretched himself upon him : and the child sneezed seven  
 36 times, and the child opened his eyes. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunam-  
 37 mite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.  
 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground ; and she took up  
 her son, and went out.

**S-17.** Elisha's ordinary ministry consisted in the oversight of the prophetic schools, and in personal instruction and helpfulness in behalf of those who still acknowledged Jehovah. Although living in Samaria, he seems often to have visited Elijah's old retreat at Carmel, there to obtain the same needed blessing of quiet thoughtfulness and devotion. The city Shunem lay upon the road he usually traversed, between Samaria and Carmel. In this city was a woman of comparative distinction and wealth, who was a worshipper of the true God. This woman, at first recognizing Elisha as a prophet of Jehovah, invites him to come in for passing refreshment and rest. Then, receiving spiritual cheer and help from his devout and genial spirit, she desires more of his presence, that she may receive more of God's blessing upon her household. Her husband gladly concurring, a chamber is specially prepared for Elisha's use, that he may make the house his home as often and as long as he will. Through Elisha's gratitude, she who thus received God's prophet, received a prophet's reward (Matt. 10 : 41). At his intercession, God gives the childless woman a son, and for some years permitted her to lavish a mother's affection upon the child. B.

**S.** Three miles north of Jezreel, by the southwest edge of Little Hermon, was Shunem—the

modern Solâm. Here, at the house of a distinguished family, the prophet Elisha was entertained, from time to time, in his goings past the place, with generous hospitality ; and here he restored to life the only child of the household—the child of promise—who had died of a sunstroke received in the harvest field. The prophet, at the time of the child's death, was at Mount Carmel, no doubt near the scene of his predecessor's great triumph over the false prophets. The distance from Shunem was about twelve miles. N. C. B.

**S, 9.** They are not rendered selfish or worldly minded by their prosperity. They feel and admit the claims of religion upon them. In Elisha they recognize a "man of God ;" first, it would seem, officially. As the official representative to them of the Most High, they regard him as entitled to kindness and hospitality. They press upon him their good offices, and insist on his taking his meals with them, "constrain him to eat bread" (verse 8). When by degrees they have become acquainted with his character, they recognize in him something more—they "perceive that he is a holy man of God" (verse 9). Like is perceived by like. It takes some holiness to perceive and recognize holiness. And the perception raises a desire for greater intimacy. Like desires like. It

will be a blessed thing if they can persuade the prophet, not merely to take an occasional meal in their house, but to be an occasional inmate—to rest there, to sleep there. So the woman proposes to her husband to build the prophet a sleeping-chamber; and he readily consents. *Hammond.*

**Man of God.** A striking title to give to a human being, and a very grand one. And yet is not this the title which every man should be able to adopt and proud to bear? We all come from His creating hand. We live on His beneficence. We are subject to His providence. A great many different kinds of life men can live on the earth, lower and higher, but there is only one best life—that which a man may live in God. A man of God should be proud of his title. Other men are proud of theirs—the man of the world, the man of letters, the statesman, the man of honor. The man of God should never be ashamed of his name, if only he has the right to bear it. *A. Raleigh.*

The life of men forgiven and the life of men attached, the life of men devoted and the life of men expectant may be represented as the life of godliness wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost in all believing people. And this life of godliness throws round a man a holy unselfishness, invests him with a beautiful charity, develops in him a pure consecration of thought and life, so that by the unction of the Holy Ghost upon him there is consciously felt, by all around him, the fragrance of an undemonstrative yet irresistible sanctity, that mighty power instilling mighty principles in all he does, that mysterious atmosphere in which every man breathing finds something of the instinct of a better life, and all are prepared to say, concerning the consistent servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Truly this is a holy man of God that passeth by us continually." *Richardson.*

**10. And it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.** In the intervals between his active ministrations, a prophet would naturally desire quiet retirement, security from interruption. He would need to reflect, to meditate, to pray, perhaps to write. The Shunammite's proposal shows not only kindness, but thoughtfulness and appreciation. *Hammond.*—A chamber was fitted up on the wall for Elisha's private use, and there he abode, and could feel at home, whenever he passed that way. How beautiful the large and unstinted generosity, the wise forethought, the warm consideration for another's comfort, displayed in this incident! This wise

and unselfish use of wealth is the true secret of obtaining enjoyment out of it. *J. O.*

**12. He said to Gehazi his servant.** Gehazi is first mentioned in connection with this narrative of the Shunammite (verse 12), of which he subsequently gave an account to the king (2 K. 8:4, 5); besides this, he is only once spoken of in his deceit practised upon Naaman and its penalty. He was the attendant upon Elisha, as Elisha himself had been upon Elijah, and Baruch was upon Jeremiah (Jer. 36:4). He may have been one of the sons of the prophets, whom Elisha here entrusts with a sacred function, and who, he may have hoped, would both be a valuable assistant to him in his work and continue it after he was taken away. *W. H. G.*

**13. I dwell among mine own people.** As if she said, "The courtesy is not small in itself, but not useful to me. I live here quietly, in a contented obscurity. I have neither fears nor ambitions. My neighbors are my friends." If the world afford any perfect contentment, it is in a middle estate; equally distant from penury, from excess; it is in a calm freedom, a secure tranquillity, a sweet fruition of ourselves, of ours. *Bp. H.*

This is indeed, in the fullest sense of the term, a contented woman, whom we here, under the reign of King Joram, meet in hospitable Shunem, as the childless hostess of God's holy prophet. That which has been bestowed on her she does not despise; calmly and peacefully her days glide on in the midst of her people. To Elisha she has offered all that her house affords; but has nothing to ask from him, even when he puts words in her mouth. *Van O.*—She said—and the words indicate the power which, even under that earlier dispensation, God's grace had gained in her heart—"I dwell among mine own people;" words worthy of a psalmist, worthy of an apostle, worthy of him who sung, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage," and of him who wrote, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content." Oh, that in an age when men run to and fro in restless quest of something which at present they have not, we could all re-echo her sentiment, and take it up into our mouths with sincerity: "I dwell among mine own people." "In my present home I desire to abide, till I exchange it for a better and an eternal one!" *E. M. G.*

**16.** Like Sarah, the woman was incredulous; she could not believe the good tidings, and thought the prophet was only raising hopes to

disappoint them. Her words, "Do not lie unto thy servant," are less harsh in the original, being merely equivalent to the "Do not deceive me" of verse 28. *Hammond.*

**18-21.** *The child's death from sunstroke.* God is about to test her faith as He had before tested that of the widow of Zarephath. This He did, as He ever does, that her faith might be exercised, confirmed, strengthened and rewarded. Therefore this child of promise and of prayer, given in love, and rejoiced over with grateful affection, was stricken with death in her enfolding arms. Without one act of preparation for burial, laying the dead boy upon Elisha's own bed, she hastens to lay her burden upon the prophet's heart. Faith there was—wonderfully simple and strong—in all her quiet and firm, uncomplaining yet energetic acting. She trusted Elisha and Elisha's God. Her acts were a prayer, and an expectation of answer that would in some way meet her sore needs.

**22-24.** *Message to her husband and his reply.* She asked that he would send an ass upon which she might ride to Carmel, and a young man to lead or drive the animal (as is now customary in the East). The distance was upward of twelve miles. She assigned no reason for her request, and the husband supposed that her purpose referred to religious instruction or counsel from the prophet. "It is neither new moon nor Sabbath," he said, thus showing that these religious festivals were still honored by devout Israelites. But satisfying him with a general reply, she persisted in seeking the prophet, and bade the servant to make all speed upon the way. B.

The husband's surprised question, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? it is neither new moon nor Sabbath," shows that it was Elisha's custom to hold religious assemblies on the Sabbath days, to which the godly in Israel resorted. This is an interesting side light on the practice of the time. Weekly assemblies were not provided for in the law; but where love to God is in the heart, it needs no law to bring believers together. J. O.

**23.** It is specially worthy of remark that the schools of the prophets served the people of the northern kingdom as a substitute for the legitimate sanctuary. From verse 23 it may be inferred that the pious betook themselves, on the new moons and Sabbaths, to the schools of the prophets; nay, from the mention of the offering of first-fruits of barley loaves and new corn (verse 42), it may be presumed that there were some who brought to the prophets the dues prescribed in the law (for the sanctuary). O.

**25-28.** *What transpired before and at the interview on Carmel.* Thither she had hastily ridden, well knowing where to find Elisha. At a distance she is recognized by the prophet. From her coming, and in haste, he infers some calamity in her household. In instant sympathy he bids his servant to run and meet her, with the inquiry if all is well. The faith that has nerved her still holds out as she answers Gehazi, *Well!* Yet she slacks not her speed until she has ascended the hill, and reached the spot where the anxious prophet has waited. Then her troubled soul finds its expression only by clasping the feet of Elisha. When Gehazi would have removed her, the master forbade him; for well Elisha read her sore grief, though he knew not its cause. In two terse, touching questions, she exposes the core of her sorrow. They conveyed an *appeal*, not a reproach, to Elisha. "Not from my asking was God's gift of the child! Thou wilt not let the gift be taken thus prematurely, and so utterly destroy the hope that thou, all unsolicited, hast awakened in these brief years of joy and love!" B.

This mourner took her trouble to the right place. She found words which in form were words of expostulation: "Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?" In reality she was recalling to the prophet that it was his own word which had promised her this child. She was telling him in effect that the child was dead, and supplicating his help to prevent his original promise being completely cancelled. God is pleased that we should plead His promises with Him. He bids us "put Him in remembrance." J. O.

How many a sad heart is to-day tempted to raise this cry of anguish! And how patient is Elisha with wild words, and how he discerns, beneath the apparent rough reproach, the misery which it implies and the petition which it veils! Elisha's Lord is no less tender in His judgment of our hasty, whirlwind words, when our hearts are sore; and if only we speak them to Him and cling to His feet, He translates them into the petitions which they mean, and is swift to answer the meaning and pass by the sound of our bitter cry. A. M.

**29-31.** *The mission of Gehazi with Elisha's staff, and its failure.* What the prophet intended or expected from the laying of his staff upon the face of the dead child we do not know. No reasonable conjecture has been framed concerning it. The extreme haste he enjoined upon Gehazi seems to suggest his *hope* that life was not wholly gone, and that it *might*



be recalled through this applied official symbol. But, ignorant as we are of Elisha's purpose, the act itself with its utter failure conveys this lesson: That *mere outward instrumentalities* are not honored of God. Even in miracle working, and assuredly in all spiritual ministry, *only a personal agent inspired with faith and exercising that faith in prayer* is used by God in the accomplishment of His gracious life-giving purposes. The child continued insensible to Gehazi's call, after the laying of the staff upon his face. The servant therefore returns to meet his master, who, with the trusting mother, was hastening back to Shunem. "The child is not awakened," he said. B.

**30.** Apparently the woman supposed that Elisha intended to do nothing more, but trust the child's recovery to such virtue as might inhere in his staff. But her own resolution was long ago taken—she would be content with nothing less than bringing the prophet face to face with her dead child. She "will not leave" him till he consents to accompany her to her home. **And he arose, and followed her;** as, no doubt, he had intended from the first. *Hammond.*

O strong faith of the Shunammite, that could not be discouraged with the seizure and continuance of death; raising up her heart still to an expectation of that life, which to the eyes of nature had been impossible, irrevocable! O infinite goodness of the Almighty, that would not suffer such faith to be frustrate; that would rather reverse the laws of nature in returning a guest from heaven, and raising a corpse from death, than the confidence of a believing heart should be disappointed! *Bp. H.*

**31.** Although on some occasions it has pleased God to allow miracles to be wrought by the instrumentality of lifeless objects, as when Elisha's bones resuscitated a dead man, and when virtue went out from the hem of our Lord's garment, and still more remarkably, when "handkerchiefs or aprons from the body of Paul were brought unto the sick, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits were cast out of them;" yet the instances are, comparatively speaking, rare, and form exceptions to what may be called the usual Divine economy of miracles. Miracles are, as a general rule, attached in Scripture to intense unwavering faith—faith, sometimes, in those that are the objects of them, almost always in those that are the workers of them. The present case was not to be an exception to the general rule, the circumstances not calling for an exception. The power of faith was to be shown forth once

more in Elisha, as not long previously in Elijah (1 K. 17 : 19-23); and Israel was to be taught, by a second marvellous example, how much the effectual fervent prayer of a faithful and righteous man avails with the Most High. *Hammond.*

**32-35.** *The dead child restored to life at Elisha's intercession.* A careful comparison of this narrative with that of Elijah's (1 K. 17 : 19-22) is greatly interesting and instructive. Like Elijah, Elisha shuts himself in his own room, with the lifeless body and with God. Like Elijah, he first cries to the Lord. Then, like his old teacher, he stretches himself upon the child, if possible that his body might impart warmth to the cold body. "And the flesh of the child waxed warm." But there needs yet more of importunity before full consciousness is restored. This Elisha utters, as he walks to and fro with intensely stirred spirit. "He continues and struggles in prayer. The Lord does not allow great deeds to be accomplished without battles and struggles, labor and perseverance" (*Bahr*). Then he returns again to repeat the symbolic act by which he expressed his yearning to aid in bringing back a full life. And God responded to his prayer of faith and its accompanying act of helpful desire. The child is awaked! B.

**34.** When that one uniting force in human society—love built upon confidence—is diverted from the poor finite creatures, and transferred from one another to Him, then His infinite energy, which is ever around us, whether we know it and open our hearts to it or no, flows into our being, and becomes an indwelling guest which fills our souls. They that love are one. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." And as the prophet in the wonderful old story laid himself down on the dead child, hand to hand, mouth to mouth, lip to lip, and heart to heart, that the throbbing heart might move the pulses, and the warmth might steal into the dull, cold frame, so, but with a contact closer, more real, more all embracing as is the difference between man and God, between spirit and flesh, Christ lays His life to our death, and in Him we too live and move. In Him we are quickened together and raised up together. Christ's dwelling in us, and we in Him, is the secret and the condition of all our spiritual life. A. M.

**36, 37.** *The child delivered to the grateful, happy mother.* With heart too full for words, reverently and gratefully she falls at the prophet's feet; thus expressing her acknowledgments to Him who had given her child back from

death. With her faith thus marvellously confirmed and rewarded, her twice-given son henceforth becomes a bond to hold her heart closely to the gracious Jehovah. B.

How beautiful are the quiet words, "Take up thy son"! She has no words; but, for all answer, comes close to him (there is no "in" in verse 37), and once again, but with what different feelings, clasps his feet. The story draws a curtain over that meeting in the prophet's chamber. Sad hearts, who have vainly longed for such a moment, can fancy the rapture. But the day will come, not here, but in the upper chamber, when parted ones shall clasp each other again; and many a mourner shall hear Jesus say from the throne what He once said from the cross, "Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother." A. M.

How true an heir is Elisha of his master; not in his graces only, but in his actions! Both of them divided the waters of Jordan; the one as his last act, the other as his first. Elijah's curse was the death of the captains and their troops; Elisha's curse was the death of the children; Elijah rebuked Ahab to his face; Elisha, Jehoram. Elijah supplied the drought of Israel by rain from heaven; Elisha supplied the drought of the three kings by waters gushing out of the earth. Elijah increased the oil of the Sareptan; Elisha increased the oil of the prophet's widow. Elijah raised from death the Sareptan's son; Elisha, the Shunammite's: both of them had one mantle, one spirit; both of them climbed up one Carmel, one heaven. *Bp. H.*

The enjoyment of our little ones, while they are with us, is a blessing, and for that we should be grateful. It is better to have had them and lost them than never to have had them at all. We have had all the radiance of their presence, and all the discipline both of their training and their departure, so that while their removal has indeed changed the world for us, their coming to us and sojourn with us have revolutionized our own natures. Our charity is broader, our sympathy is wider, our characters are deeper. The little ones have gone, but the qualities which they created in us and fostered within us remain to be a blessing both to ourselves and others. That is a profound utterance of Tennyson, when in lines of condolence to a bereaved friend he says:

"God gives us love; something to love  
He lends us; but when love is grown  
To ripeness, that on which it throves  
Falls off; and love is left alone."

So the gift of a child, even though he should be taken from us, leaves a deposit of blessing on our characters, and is a perennial source of benefit. Moreover, it is not to be forgotten, that if the mystery of the death of little ones be great, the consolation is proportionate. We have the unfaltering conviction of their eternal salvation, and when we think of the dangers of life, when we remember what perils have menaced ourselves, and how we have often come near making shipwreck of our souls, we may sometimes see reason to be grateful that God took our loved ones away out of reach of the storm, into the haven of security. Then what a drawing heavenward is felt by the father or the mother who has a child in glory! *W. M. Taylor.*

The simple, touching story affectingly illustrates one of the main purposes and uses of afflictive providences when visited upon the believer. By every such visitation God intends to exercise and strengthen faith, by begetting a sense of utter dependence upon Himself and by constraining the afflicted soul to look unto and wait upon Him for support and deliverance. Such trust—dependent, expectantly looking, patiently hoping and waiting—He always rewards in the issue. B.

From Heb. 11:35 we learn that it was in answer to the woman's faith that she received her dead raised to life again. It was her faith that led her to seek the prophet's aid; in her trial she held firmly to the word of promise, and in answer to the prophet's prayer of faith her son was given back to her. It was neither the staff, nor the breath of the prophet, nor the warm contact of the living with the dead that brought back life to the child. It was the prayer of faith that moved the Divine power. That alone could restore the boy to his stricken mother. Faith may not *now* bring back the dead to life, yet it always brings victory over death. It looks forward to the day of resurrection, when our Lord will restore the child to the mother, and the friend to the friend, never again to be parted. *Anon.*

The prophet's course in seeking the restoration of the dead child impressively intimates the human means and methods through which the spiritually dead are divinely renewed. Only the spiritually living have a part in the Divine work of restoring lifeless souls. But in God's plan, this part is an essential condition of His work. This part is twofold: first, the earnest wrestling prayer of faith; and next, personal contact of the living soul with the dead, through a *visible* godly life and the *expressed*

interest of warm living sympathy and yearning. Such a manifest holy life and such expressed yearning joined to fervent intercession cannot fail to awaken healthful thought and feeling in unrenewed souls. For the Spirit of God always co-works with such prayer and personal effort. Thus, and thus only, does He ordinarily quicken the spiritually dead. How great, then, the responsibility of every Christian believer in connection with Christ's vast work of seeking and saving the lost! *How much has every Christian soul to do in the salvation of those especially among whom his lot is cast!*

Elisha's dealing with the Shunammite wife and mother presents effectively the human side

of the Old Testament Gospel. We behold him first as a visitant and teacher; then a friend and frequent and welcome guest. In the natural outflow of friendship, and knowing the willing love of God, he asks the best earthly boon for his friendly entertainer, the boon of motherhood. And afterward, when the mother's faith was sorely tried and failed not, he besought and brought again the child-blessing from God. And the history of subsequent years shows that the human friendship was held and proved by other fruits of blessing to the mother. In these, as in other points, there is clearly evinced the humanizing character of the Old Testament spirit. B.

#### THE POISONED POTTAGE PURIFIED AT GILGAL.

2 Kings 4 : 38-41.

38 And Elisha came again to Gilgal : and there was a dearth in the land ; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him : and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and  
39 seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets. And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred  
40 them into the pot of pottage : for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said,  
41 O man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof. But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot ; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.

The great pot is set on to seethe pottage in, and one goes out to gather herbs to eke out the scanty supply. Attracted by some wild creepers, the messenger gathers therefrom a lapful of gourds, which he mistakes for gourds of a similar appearance that are edible. The plants he had gathered were in reality poisonous. He brought them home, and they were shred into the pottage. J. O.—Prompt measures must be taken, if poisoning is even suspected. He has meal brought—not that meal has any virtue in itself against any deleterious drug. But he acts, now as always, under Divine direction, and is instructed to use meal on this occasion, as he used salt in healing the waters of Jericho. *Hammond.*—The meal was brought, and cast into the pottage, and the evil was at once cured. There seems no reason for using the meal except that it was customary to accompany these prophetic miracles with an outward symbolical act; and the meal, as a symbol of what was wholesome and nutritious in food, was as appropriate a medium as any to be used. We get this idea—that the unwholesome is to be displaced by the wholesome. If the bane is to be destroyed, we must use as antidote that which is of opposite character. We may learn

two lessons : 1. The danger of being deceived by appearances. Things often are not what they seem. The most plausible errors are those which bear a superficial resemblance to great truths. We need to have our "senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5 : 14). To the true vine there correspond many wild vines; to the gourds that nourish and satisfy, many fair but poisonous imitations. 2. The best intentions may lead to sad mistakes. The important point to be noticed here is that our intentions, however good, cannot prevent things from acting according to their real nature. The person who gathered the gourds thought them innocuous, but they produced their poisonous effects all the same. "Sincerity" does not exonerate us from the consequences of our actions; at least it cannot prevent these consequences following. Poisonous principles are as harmful in their influence when promulgated in ignorance, as when diffused with the fullest knowledge of their deadly character. "They knew it not" does not suffice to alter the nature of facts. The pottage was no sooner tasted than the peculiar flavor and felt effects discovered to those eating it that there was something amiss. The cry was raised, "O thou man of

God, there is death in the pot!" One poisonous ingredient had destroyed the value of much wholesome food. It did not require that all the elements in the pottage should be unwholesome; it was enough that this one was. Through it the whole mixture was rendered

deadly. It is not uncommon to defend a system by pointing to the numerous truths which it contains. But one vital error blended with these truths may give the whole a fatal quality. The Gospel itself may be adulterated with specious lies which destroy its power for good. J. O.

## MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND CORN.

2 Kings 4 : 42-44.

42 And there came a man from Baal-shalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of corn in his sack. And he said, Give unto  
43 the people, that they may eat. And his servant said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? But he said, Give the people, that they may eat; for thus saith the LORD,  
44 They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

42. The "loaves" of the Israelites were cakes or rolls, rather than "loaves" in the modern sense of the word. Each partaker of a meal usually had one for himself. Naturally, twenty "loaves" would be barely sufficient for twenty men. **And full ears of corn—i.e.**, a few ripe ears of the same corn as that whereof the bread was made. **And he said, Give unto the people—i.e.**, to the sons of the prophets who dwelt at Gilgal—**that they may eat.**

43. This time, however, he added an explanation of the proceeding: **for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.** God had supernaturally intimated to him that the quantity of food would prove ample for the hundred men; they would show that they had had enough by leaving some of it. And the result was as predicted.

44. **So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, accord-**

**ing to the word of the Lord.** We are not expressly told how the miracle was wrought. But the analogy of our Lord's miracles of feeding the multitudes, whereof this is a manifest type, makes it probable that in this case also there was a miraculous increase of the food. The object of the writer in communicating the account is certainly not merely to show how the Lord cared for His servants, but to relate another miracle wrought by Elisha, of a different kind from those previously related. *Hammond.*

It has been generally seen that this miracle was a faint foreshadowing of our Lord's far more marvellous feeding of thousands with even scantier materials. The resemblance is not only in the broad fact, but in various minute particulars, as in the distribution through the hands of others; the material, bread; the surprised question of the servant, and the evidence of superfluity in the fragments that were left. (See Matt. 14 : 19-21; John 6 : 9-13.) B. C.

## RECOVERING THE LOST AXE-HEAD AT THE JORDAN.

2 Kings 6 : 1-7.

1 And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell be-  
2 fore thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go  
3 ye. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered,  
4 I will go. So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.  
5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe-head fell into the water: and he cried, and said,  
6 Alas, my master! for it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he  
shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and made the iron  
7 to swim. And he said, Take it up to thee. So he put out his hand, and took it.

That the schools of the prophets had special buildings for their accommodation is not only inferable from the necessities of the case, but is touchingly indicated here, as we read that

"the sons of the prophets" came to Elisha to say that their accommodations for students' rooms were too strait, and proposing to go to Jordan and its timbered bottoms, and take

thence every man his beam [pole], and fit up more such humble accommodations for their shelter. He said, "Go;" but they quietly suggest that he go with them; and, like a true and faithful father-prophet, he went. It was fortunate that he did; for so he was on hand to bring the iron axe-head to the surface when by accident it had sprung from its helve and fallen into the Jordan. The cry, "Alas, master, for it was begged!" brought Elisha's miracle-working power at once to their aid. They were too poor to buy their axes. This man had to beg his—ask it, as the Hebrew signifies—yet never in the sense of borrow. It is the word used in the history (Ex. 3:22; 11:2) of the Israelites asking jewels and goods of the Egyptians—which was by no means "borrowing." All in all, this is a very pleasant inside view of college life in those ancient schools of the prophets—antedating by a few thousand years the experiences of some prophet schools of our age which have struggled upward from the humblest beginnings amid many privations, and not a little morally wholesome manual toil, and occasionally some cheering tokens of a helping power from above. H. C.

**1. The place where we dwell with thee.** Literally, "the place where we sit before thee"—i.e., "the place where we assemble, and sit to hear thy teaching." Elisha did not, properly speaking, "dwell with" the sons of the prophets. He only visited them in circuit, staying a short time at each place where a "school" was established.

**5. The axe-head.** Literally, "the iron." The Jews used iron for the heads of axes at a very early date. (See De. 19:5.) They probably acquired a knowledge of the smelting process in Egypt, where iron was employed at least from the time of the third Rameses. **For it was borrowed.** This is part of the wood-cutter's exclamation, not a remark of the author's. The wood-cutter shows the axe-handle to Elisha, and cries, "Alas, my lord, and it a borrowed one!" He merely made the natural exclamation of a man to whom such a misfortune had happened.

**6. And he cut down a stick and cast it in thither.** It has been suggested that no miracle is here intended, but that Elisha, seeing the axe-head at the bottom of the river, thrust in a long stick, and adroitly passing it through the hole designed to receive the handle, lifted the axe-head to the surface. But there are two objections to this. First, it is not the natural sense of the words, which imply that the prophet threw the wood into the water;

and secondly, the sacred writers do not record mere acts of manual dexterity. **Made the iron to swim.** His action, though it could no more naturally produce such a result than salt could purify a spring or meal remove the noxious character of poisonous herbs, yet had the effect which he intended. The iron rose to the surface, and remained there.

No doubt there is something startling in the trivial character of this miracle, and of the few others which resemble it. We are apt not to be satisfied unless there is clearly seen by us to be a *dignus vindice nodus* in each case of miraculous interposition. But we really know very little as to the laws which govern the exercise of miraculous powers, where such powers have been committed by God to a mere mortal. It is possible that they may sometimes, like natural gifts, be so much under their possessor's control that he can exercise them, or not exercise them, at pleasure. And it may depend on his discretion whether they are exercised in important cases only, or in trivial cases also. Elisha had evidently great kindness of heart. He could not see a grief without wishing to remedy it. And it seems as if he had sometimes used his miraculous power in pure good nature, when no natural way of remedying an evil presented itself. B. C.

In this miracle God did not do all. There was water, air, sky and iron. Instead of these four concaves there were five, one of which was Jehovah's will. Why did the iron sink? It was heavier than the water; gravity pulled it down. Why did it swim? This excess of gravity might have been counteracted by a lifting up with a string or a stick; but God simply interpolated a new transient force equal to the excess of the specific gravity of the iron over the water, and acting in a direction opposite to that of gravity, and the iron floated. This is also true of the most complex of miracles, as the rising of Lazarus from the dead. It was not simply to arrest decay, but to make the atoms of the body go back to healthy action, as in life. God simply changed the conditions by a new Divine force, and the atoms acted as in his growing youth and manhood.

How different the miracles of the Bible from other miracles! They were certain definite events, not done in the dark nor in a corner, but in the clear light of day, where everybody could see them. They were repeated under varying circumstances, before many witnesses, and under the inspection of the senses—sight, touch, hearing. A. A. Hodge.

## Section 19.

## NAAMAN'S LEPROSY REMOVED. LEPROSY INFLICTED UPON GEHAZI.

2 KINGS 5 : 1-27.

**2 K. 5 : 1** Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given victory unto Syria : he was  
**2** also a mighty man of valour, *but he was* a leper. And the Syrians had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid ; and she waited on  
**3** Naaman's wife. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet  
**4** that is in Samaria ! then would he recover him of his leprosy. And one went in, and told his  
**5** lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand *pieces* of gold, and ten changes of raiment.  
**6** And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, And now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of  
**7** his leprosy. And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? but consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel  
**8** against me. And it was so, when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let  
**9** him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel. So Naaman came  
**10** with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh  
**11** shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name  
**12** of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abanah and Parpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not  
**13** wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash,  
**14** and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped *himself* seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God : and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child,  
**15** and he was clean. And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him : and he said, Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth,  
**16** but in Israel : now therefore, I pray thee, take a present of thy servant. But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it ; but he  
**17** refused. And Naaman said, If not, yet I pray thee let there be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth ; for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD. In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant ; when  
**18** my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD  
**19** pardon thy servant in this thing. And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.  
**20** But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared this Naaman the Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought : as the LORD liveth,  
**21** I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw one running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and  
**22** said, Is all well? And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from the hill country of Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets ; give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of raiment. And Naaman said,  
**23** Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of raiment, and laid them upon two of his servants ; and they bare  
**24** them before him. And when he came to the hill, he took them from their hand, and bestowed

25 them in the house : and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, 26 Thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him, Went not mine heart *with thee*, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and menservants and 27 maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper *as white as snow*.

THE HISTORIAN continues his narrative of Elisha's miracles, commenced in chap. 2, and gives in the present chapter a very graphic and complete account of two which were especially remarkable, and which stood in a peculiar relation the one toward the other. One was *the removal of leprosy*; the other *its infliction*. One was wrought on a foreigner and a man of eminence; the other on a Hebrew and a servant. The second was altogether consequential upon the first, without which the occasion for it would not have arisen. The two together must have greatly raised the reputation of the prophet, and have given him an influence beyond the borders of the land of Israel; at the same time extending the reputation of Jehovah as a great God through many of the surrounding nations. *Hammond*.

It is not only the doctrine of the New Testament, but of the Old as well, that the Lord is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (Rom. 3 : 29). When Abram was first called to be the father of the chosen race, who should be for a time the depositaries of Divine revelation and of the true religion, it was with explicit reference to the ultimate diffusion of these blessings and the salvation of the world (Gen. 12 : 3). The restriction was not with the view of excluding others from participation in the saving benefits granted to the seed of Abraham, but for their protection and perpetuation in the midst of prevailing idolatry and corruption, until such time as the barriers could be safely thrown down and the Church could assume the aggressive. Meanwhile, intimations were given, from time to time, to remind the Israelites that they were not the exclusive favorites of heaven, but that God's grace was for the Gentiles likewise. Such an intimation is contained in Elijah's abode with the widow in Zarephath rather than with any of the widows of Israel, and in Elisha's cleansing the leprosy of Naaman the Syrian rather than that of any of the lepers in Israel, as we learn from our Lord's reference to them in the synagogue of Nazareth at the outset of his ministry (Luke 4 : 25-27). W. H. G.

**I. The station, condition, and character of Naaman.** In the Syrian kingdom of Benhadad

he held the highest military and civil office; in both relations standing next to the king himself. This position he had achieved by his own wisdom in counsel and valor in the field. Yet was he only an instrument in God's hand, for it is added, "by him the Lord had given deliverance to Syria." And herein is declared the grand truth that *God is in all human history*; that His sovereignty controls the course and issue of all events, alike among idolatrous nations as among His own chosen people. But with all his honorable distinction and great wealth, *Naaman was a leper*. He was afflicted, not with that severer form of the disease which produces a disgusting disfiguration and decay of the body, but with the milder type, which was known as the *white leprosy*. Yet its effects were sore enough to embitter his otherwise happy life, and to throw a shadow of sadness over the court and within his own household. The whole story shows a deep sympathy on the part of all associated with him, from the king his master to his lowest dependents. And this sympathy, together with the spirit he manifests in the incidents that follow, reveals much that is attractive and noble in the character of the man. They show that he was attached to his master and faithful to his interests; that he was kindly to his servants, ready to recognize their sympathy, to hear, to consider, and act upon their friendly suggestions; even to yield to their reasonable remonstrances when his pride of station and of opinion had been deeply wounded by Elisha's dealing. And his nobleness of spirit is further shown in his grateful return and acknowledgments to the prophet after his restoration, and his spontaneous self-consecration to Jehovah. B.

**1. By him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria.** From the history of Syria so far as it is referred to in the books of the Kings, we should find no clew to this allusion to national perils. Syria had recently been victorious over the combined armies of Israel and Judah at Ramoth-Gilead. But all is explained by the recently discovered Assyrian monuments. There we find that Asshur-idannipal had, a few years previously, overrun the whole of Northern Syria—then Hittite—and

had received the submission of Tyre and Sidon. But as regards Phœnicia and Syria at least, the conquest was not permanent. As soon as he had retired, Damascus threw off the yoke; and when his son, Shalmaneser II., succeeded him, B.C. 859, Syria paid no tribute. In the seventh year, and again in the eleventh year of his reign, Shalmaneser tells us he led his armies against Benhadad of Damascus, and defeated him; but in neither case does he claim to have carried off any trophies, imposed tribute or received submission. We may, therefore, safely infer that the Syrian resistance had been successful. These campaigns occurred in the beginning of the reign of Jehoram of Israel, and it is evident that Naaman had been the successful general who repelled the invader and gave deliverance to Syria. Surely this illustration well deserves a place among the undesigned coincidences which set forth the historical accuracy of Old Testament history. *Trietram.*

2-4. *The captive maid's sympathy reported to Naaman and to the king.* Syria had long been a rod in God's hand for the chastening of Israel. Over the common border of the two kingdoms frequent inroads were made by marauding bands of Syrians. In one of these raids this Israelitish girl had been taken from her—possibly desolated—home. But from that home she had borne with her the blessed results of a godly training. Her faith in God had taught her tenderness in behalf of the afflicted. Even to those who had wrought her evil, she would return only good. Knowing Elisha's power with God, and trusting in God's willingness to heal and bless, her heart constrains her to utter the simple fervent desire that her lord would seek the prophet's help. (Thus incidentally we learn that Elisha's prophetic character was generally known, and the influence of his teachings widely felt in Israel.) And child and captive though she was, her devout and helpful spirit won its way into the heart and faith of her mistress. The words that thus awakened hope in the wife were speedily reported to Naaman, and by him to the king. So much of faith and hope was aroused in both as to lead to instant preparation for testing the prophet's power. B.

The little maid who waited on Naaman's wife was a lily among thorns—a transplanted rose, beautiful and fragrant, in a foreign garden. Her harp was not broken by the rough hand of captivity; nor was it hung on the willows. She could sing the Lord's song, the song of peace and goodwill to men, in a strange land. She was kind to those who had been unkind to her; she overcame evil with good. It gave

her no pleasure that the captain whose soldiers had stolen her away from the land of the Hebrews was thus deeply afflicted. She desired his relief. As she knew no country more blessed than her own, and no person there more renowned than Elisha, she recommended that he journey to that good land, and make the acquaintance of that remarkable man. And thus was she true to the injunction of the Lord to her nation, to seek the good of those countries whither they were carried captive. She was a spirit of peace in a warrior's palace—a living leaf of mercy scattered among the Gentiles. Charity, seeking not its own, burned in her heart; and her tongue was moved by it to speak words kind as the oil on Aaron, and sweet as the morning dew. "Would to God, my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria; for he would recover him of his leprosy." All that a man hath will he give for his life. The trumpet of fame and the plaudits of the multitude are unheeded in the sick chamber; while the voice of a child proposing a remedy is listened to with delight. R. T.

5-7. *Naaman's journey, and reception by Jehoram, king of Israel.* A royal letter-missive is prepared for Jehoram, and munificent gifts as a fitting return for the hoped-for restoration. Both the character of the letter and the proposed gifts seem to imply the heathen king's impression that Elisha was a superior magician or conjurer at the court and under the direction of Jehoram, to whom the matter of the cure would of course be referred. For no idea had either Benhadad or Naaman of a God who would gratuitously grant so great a blessing as this. And the professed wonder-workers of that day, as ever since, were wont to demand enormous rewards for their services. In Jehoram's exclamation (upon reading the letter of the Syrian king) is implied an acknowledgment of Jehovah as the only true God. He knew that leprosy was incurable save by Divine power. Further, he acknowledges that he himself had no claim or means or hope of the interposition of that power. There may also have been a tacit conviction of blasphemy in the request of Benhadad. But his is not the devout heart to be horrified at the thought of such blasphemy. What filled his selfish soul with alarm and suspicion was the belief that the Syrian king was only seeking a fresh occasion of quarrel with himself and his people. In his fear, too, as in his previous prosperity, he forgot the existence of the prophet who had already delivered his father (Ahab) and himself from this same Syrian power.



But God interposes at this juncture by Elisha's message to the troubled king. The tone of reproof and command that appears in the message recalls the similar tone of Elijah to Ahab. Here again the sovereign was summoned to do the bidding of the subject, and in this case not by the prophet himself, but by his servant. But in assuming this commanding tone, both prophets were inspired with the same spirit of jealousy for the Lord of Hosts. Both were animated with the same purpose of showing that there was still a God in Israel. And this purpose was achieved in the case before us, as it had been with Elijah. "None but God," Jehoram had said, "can make alive (or) recover a man of his leprosy;" and confirming this declaration by the after miracle wrought at the prophet's word, God reveals Himself afresh to Jehoram; impressing anew upon his own and his people's heart the old lesson that *He alone is God, the God of Israel!*

**9, 10.** *Naaman's reception and treatment by Elisha.* At the prophet's summons, he goes with his splendid retinue from the king's palace to Elisha's lowly abode. But the prophet neither asks him to enter, nor goes forth to receive him. He only sends him a simple message by a servant. As the prophet of Jehovah, Elisha thus supports the character and dignity of that God who is no respecter of persons. He corrects the ignorant notions of Naaman, gathered from the familiar methods of the heathen enchanters. Unlike these magical pretenders, Elisha keeps himself in the background. He honors God by putting the issue upon *His* working, while he demands the use of means by Naaman. Thus he excites and exercises the faith, and tests the obedience of the princely leper. He brings distinctly into view and so exalts the sole agency of Jehovah; and he elicits Naaman's acknowledgment of that agency. He strikes effectually, yet not in a way of provocation, at the pride and self-will of Naaman. And thus he helps the cure of the inward leprosy of soul, as well as the outward bodily disease. For all these reasons, Elisha sends by his servant's mouth the simple direction, "Go, wash seven times in Jordan!" B.

Jehoram may despair, but Elisha is confident. His message to his king (verse 8) has a noble ring of assured power and consciousness of his prophetic dignity. "Let him come now to me," as befits a suitor. The great end of miracle is clearly put in "he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel." That was not self-assertion, from which the gentle nature of Elisha was wholly free, but upholding the honor of

his office, and, therein, of Him who had appointed him to it. The picture of the long train of Naaman's attendants, and especially of horses and chariots drawn up at Elisha's humble door, has stamped itself on the writer's mind, as well it might. Here is the dreaded soldier, who wielded the power that had often made Israel tremble, sitting, a humble suppliant, outside the prophet's house. The prophet stays indoors, because he has nothing to do with the cure but to proclaim how to obtain it. He is only a voice. His personality disappears. He brings the sick man into the presence of the true physician's prescription, and there leaves him. So our sense-bound nature is always ready to fly to forms and sacraments and outward means, administered by priests, as the vehicles of forgiveness and cleansing. But God's messenger has no such function. He has simply to proclaim the conditions of cure. A. M.

**Wash in Jordan.** He was told to do this particular thing because of its symbolic significance. Leprosy was defilement; washing was the symbol of cleansing and purification. And the river Jordan in the Lord's land represented a cleansing by His immediate agency. Seven times, both from its significance as the number of perfection and because the repetition afforded a further test of Naaman's faith. The cure was not effected until the number was complete. If he had dipped himself six times, and gone away, he would have experienced no cure. W. H. G.

**11, 12.** *Naaman's impulsive angry words.* His wrath was natural. His "thought," that is, the method of Elisha's acting which he had counted on, was utterly disappointed. No respect was shown to his person and rank. No public ceremony in the presence of his retinue; no incantations or prayers; no magical touching of the prophet's hand; no instant marvelous effect. All this was in *his thought*. Instead of all this display in compliment to his state and in gratification of his vanity, only a *message* by a *servant*. With his unchanged human nature, he could not but go "away in a rage." The proud Syrian altogether overlooked the relative position of Elisha and himself in reference to the desired cure. He forgot that the method of cure should properly originate with the agent of the cure, who would best know what under God would effect the cure. And he did not *then* consider that the cure consisted not in the washing, much less in the waters of any river, but in the power of God, exerted in connection with *His own pre-*

*scription.* Not in the means, but in their Divine authorization, together with the obedience which accepted and used them. All this he afterward gratefully acknowledged.

Apart from his national pride in the rivers of Damascus, his high estimate was fully justified by their superior beauty, breadth, and clearness. "The Abana is no doubt the modern Barada, which rises in the tableland some twenty-three miles from Damascus, and flows through the city in seven beautiful streams. The Pharpar passes a little below the city." The Jordan's turbid waters bore no comparison with these magnificent streams, supplied, as they were, so abundantly by the extended and lofty ranges of Anti-Lebanus. But the Jordan was in a peculiar sense the river of God, and had been oft hallowed by His marvellous presence in Israel's history. There was a fitness, therefore, in the direction of the prophet. This also Naaman afterward learned. B.

#### 11. He will surely come out to me.

This was the tribute which Naaman expected to be paid to his rank. To this day, in the East, the exact mode of meeting and receiving a guest is one of the most important parts of social etiquette. The host is naturally seated on a cushion, carpet or mat, exactly in centre of the side of the room opposite to the door, on the raised dais which is generally to be found in an Eastern hall or guest-chamber. If the visitor be of inferior rank, the host remains seated, while the other advances, making a salaam or obeisance at each step, the form of which differs according as he is a slave, a freeman, a messenger, a suppliant or a trader. If he be of equal or nearly equal rank, the master rises, and makes a step or several steps forward. And, as I have often experienced, in exact proportion to the number of his paces is the amount of consideration shown to the guest. If an inferior is honored by the visit of a superior, all propriety demands that he should at once come forward and meet his visitor before or outside his door. But Elisha would humble the pride of Naaman. *Tristram.*

Elisha's conduct may serve as an illustration of one characteristic of God's great message of healing for the world. The Gospel puts us all on one level, and treats us all in the same fashion. Naaman wanted to be dealt with as a great man who happened to be a leper; Elisha served him as a leper who happened to be a great man. So Christianity brushes aside all surface distinctions, and goes down to the deeplying identities of character and need. We have to be content to be dealt with, not as cul-

tivated, educated, refined, distinguished people, but as sinners; for we are all alike in that. But many of us dislike this, and want to be cured indeed, but with proper deference. Naaman has plenty of successors living yet, who prefer not to be saved from their sins, because the way is offensive to their self-esteem. But that impartial treatment of all is the glory of the Gospel, and is the precursor of as universal a healing. "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all." . . . Let me put it into plain English. Whether do you think it matters most in your relation to God—yours and mine—that we are sinners, or that we are cultivated people? Whether do you think it matters most that our hearts have started aside from Him and our hands have done evil, or that we can read Latin and Greek books and are scholars? Whether do you think it matters most that we have broken God's commandments, or that we have made a quantity of money, and live in fine houses, and take a position before our fellows? Are we going to stand upon our miserable, tiny mole-hills beneath those solemn stars far above us and say: "Their light ought to fall upon us in another fashion from what it does on those people that live a little lower down"? I am a rich man. Come out and strike thy hand over the place. I have got a cultivated taste, a highly polished intellect. I must have another gospel from the vulgar crowd. I am a man of position and fame. I am not going to be treated like that poor old woman in her garret, like that soul struggling with insanity, like that little child, like that barbarian just dragged out of cannibalism and savagery. There must be something special for me! There *is* something for you. If the distinctions on which you pride yourselves are worth anything, they will help you to apprehend and profit by God's gift. But the gift is one. You must be content to sit at the public table, to make one of the thousands on the grass there, fed with the same food as all the others. If any Pharisee or scribe *will* gather up his robes about him and demand a meal apart, he will have to go without. A. M.

There were two ways of cleansing the leprosy: the grand way that Naaman expected; the very simple way which the prophet prescribed. Even so there are two ways of salvation: God's way and man's way. Man's way is unavailing, yet much frequented, because it flatters the pride of man. Man's way of salvation deals with what it takes to be great things: great works which man himself is to do, great organizations, great gifts, which flatter human

vanity and will-worship, but have this trifling defect, that they are of no avail. God's plan knows nothing of earthly grandeurs, burdensome minutiae, external observances. God's messages are very short and very few and simple. He says only, "Wash and be clean;" "Believe and obey;" "Believe and live." It rests with you to take Christ's service or man's bondage, Christ's simplicity or man's inventions. If the kingdom of God is not within you, then it is nowhere for you. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

*Farrar.*

**12. Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus.** Truly to the eye of man the Jordan can bear no comparison with the rivers of Damascus, any more than the bare hills of Israel with the garden-forests of the "City of the Sun." Turbid and discolored from the time when it leaves the clear blue lake of Galilee till it enters the lifeless basin of the Dead Sea; twisting and writhing in its lonely course through the deep, solitary, and, for the most part, desolate valley; without even an isolated human habitation on its banks, and only a narrow belt of trees and verdure on either side to mark its course—the Jordan, apart from its history and the phenomena of its sudden birth and exit, has nothing to attract. But the Abana—or, as it is now called, the Barada—the river to which the beauteous oasis of Damascus owes its beauty and its very existence—winding from the Anti-Lebanon through a deep green zone, its waters clear and transparent as crystal, dashing through rocky dells, or buried from sight under the foliage of a forest of fruit-trees of every kind—the Abana was justly the Syrian's boast. No wonder that the limpid Abana seemed to Naaman worthier than the muddy Jordan! . . . From the summit of Mt. Hermon we looked down on Tyre and Sidon, on Carmel and Gerizim and Nebo. Lakes Huleh and Gennesareth, sunk in the depths beneath us and reflecting the sunlight, were magnificent. And very striking were the views to the north and east, with the head-waters of the Pharpar rising beneath us and the Abana in the far distance, both rivers marking the courses of their fertilizing streams by the deep green lines of verdure, till the eye rested on the brightness of Damascus, and then turned up the wide opening of Cœle-Syria until shut in by Lebanon. *Tristram.*

Damascus lies in a plain at the eastern foot of Anti-Lebanon, six or eight days' journey from Jerusalem. For many miles the city is girdled by fertile fields and gardens, watered by

the Barada and other streams; and the vegetation is so fresh and green, that in the East Damascus is called "a pearl in the midst of emeralds." As the traveller approaches it from Anti-Lebanon, the view is magnificent. A plain, fifty miles in circuit, bordered by blue mountains in the distance, lies before him, forming a vast waving grove of walnut, fig, pomegranate, plum, apricot, citron, and other fruit-trees; while in the distance, rising above this vast sea of green, brown, and yellow foliage, are seen the leaden domes, the gilded crescents, and the marble minarets of Damascus. The situation seems as if marked out by Nature as the site of a great and wealthy city. In the course of its long history it has passed through many fluctuations of fortune, and acknowledged many different masters; at the present day, with a population of some 150,000, it is still one of the most considerable cities of the East. W. G. B.

The Damascus oasis is really a triangle, containing more than two hundred square miles. It owes its existence entirely to the streams from Hermon and Lebanon, especially the Awaj (or Pharpar), and the Barada, the old Abana. The waters of these rivers are distributed everywhere by canals, and where they go they carry fertility and beauty. In the days of Abraham, "Damesek" is spoken of as a well-known city. It seems likely that Abraham tarried here on his way from Mesopotamia to Canaan, and "Eliezer of Damascus," afterward his steward, may then have been added to his family. From that day to this it has never ceased to be a populous city. If it be asked how it is that amid the fall of empires and the destruction of great cities—Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Memphis, Thebes—Damascus ever lives, the gurgling waters of the limpid Barada give the reply. This oasis always has been the natural stopping-place for caravans, travellers and armies moving from the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates in the East across the great Arabian steppe to Palestine, to the Mediterranean ports and to Egypt, in the West and Southwest. As we drew toward it we had a token of this fact in meeting a herd of one hundred and forty camels being led from Bagdad on the Tigris to Cairo, the metropolis of Egypt, for sale there. The causes which led armies and tradesmen by this route from Assyria and Babylonia to Egypt three and four thousand years ago are still in force. Damascus is the great highway-house between the East and the West. *Dulles.*

**Better than all the waters of Is-**

**rael.** What is Jordan that I should wash in it? What is the preaching that I should attend on it, where I hear nothing but what I knew before? What are these beggarly elements of water, bread, and wine? Are not these the reasonings of a soul that forgets who appoints the means of grace? What, though it be clay, let Christ use it, and it shall open the eyes, though in itself more likely to put them out. *Gurnall.*—Christianity comes to us—or rather, instead of that abstract word, let us say Christ, who *is* Christianity, comes to us—trusting wholly and only to spiritual remedies. He, too, says “wash and be clean.” The one power that cleanses is His blood for pardon, His spirit for holiness. The one condition of receiving these is simple faith in Him; all externals are nothing. Forms and ceremonies, acts of worship, and church ordinances are of no avail. The bond that unites us to Him who is our life is the medium through which life flows to us. And that one bond is faith; and that life is the life-giver who died for us. The Gospel depends wholly on spiritual forces, and is received only by spiritual acts. . . . Christ’s work for us must be all in all, or not at all. There must be no eking out ours with His; no saying, “Well, I do as well as I can—and for the rest I will trust in Christ!” The old cannot be patched with the new in that fashion. You must throw away the rags, and let Him clothe you wholly from head to foot—not in your own righteousness, completed with bits of His—but in His wholly—“if so be that being clothed we may not be found naked.” Powerless we are, but He is strong. Sick, but He is the healer. Leprous, but He both will and can make us clean. A. M.

**13, 14.** *The servants’ interposition heeded, and the result.* Not blinded by pride, nor maddened by passion, they could see nothing humiliating or unreasonable in the proposed washing in Jordan. It seemed to them, as it really was, a simple and appropriate means of healing. So in their strong affection and sympathy, they venture upon their unanswerable appeal. His earnest desire of recovery, they humbly say, would lead him to undergo any amount of toil or of sacrifice. How much rather, then, do this small thing, demanding neither toil nor sacrifice? Their deep interest and sympathy and these reasonable words at once soothe and convince Naaman. His anger is quieted, and he comes to himself. He realizes his leprous condition and the folly of his pride. His faith is encouraged and hope is rekindled. Both prove strong enough for the journey to the

river, and for the sevenfold bath. And both faith and hope find full reward, when, having obeyed “the saying of the man of God, his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child.” In these miracles of the Old Testament, like most of those recorded in the New, some form of human acting preceded or attended the exertion of Divine power. In the restoration of the dead children by Elijah and Elisha, there was the personal contact as well the prayer of faith. Here the seven dippings in Jordan in the spirit of *obedience* to “the saying of the man of God.” And as in Naaman’s case healing and faith followed close upon obedience, so would it prove with many a sin-troubled soul. If only such a soul would *obey* the call of Christ to come to Him for healing and cleansing, virtue would assuredly go forth from Him, and the inestimable blessing of the new life would be experienced. B.

These men loved more their master’s health than his passion; and would rather therefore advise than flatter; draw him to good than follow him to evil. Since it was a prophet from whom he received this prescription, they persuade him not to despise it; intimating there could be no fault in the slightness of the receipt, so long as there was no defect of power in the commander; that the virtue of the cure should be in his obedience, not in the nature of the remedy. They persuade and prevail. Next to the prophet Naaman may thank his servants that he is not a leper. He goes down upon their entreaty, and dips seven times in Jordan. His flesh riseth; his leprosy vanisheth: not the unjust fury and techiness of the patient shall cross the cure; lest, while God is severe, the prophet should be discredited. *Bp. H.*

Naaman had good servants. The little maid sent him to Elisha, and now his attendants will not let him go. Their advice is so undeniably reasonable that there is no resisting it. Naaman had already “done a great thing,” in coming to the foreign soil, and seeking help from an Israelite, as well as in bringing so large a reward, which he was ready to give for healing, and now to refuse to do so simple a thing would be preposterous. But it is a peculiarity of human nature, that it is always more willing to seek great ends by difficult than by easy paths, and suspects simple means if they profess to accomplish large results. We see the same tendency everywhere. Man loves inolution, and trouble, and effort. God loves simplicity. The most unreasonable and tragic instance is the frequent rejection of the Gospel, just because there is so little for us to do in

order to be cured. It asks nothing from us but our acceptance of its terms. People are willing to fast and go on pilgrimages, and practice austerities, to swing with hooks in their shoulder-blades or to hold their hands up till the arm is stiffened, or to build churches, and spend money and pains to secure salvation, however falsely they may conceive of the nature of it; but they are not willing to give up trying to do anything, and to take salvation as God's free gift. A. M.

A readiness to do some great thing is not peculiar to Naaman the Syrian. There are many Christians who can never find a place large enough to do their duty. They must needs strain after great changes, and their works must utter themselves by a loud report. Any reform in society, short of a revolution, any improvement in character, less radical than that of conversion, is too faint a work, in their view, to be much valued. Nor is it merely ambition, but often it is a truly Christian zeal, guarded by no sufficient views of the less imposing matters of life, which betrays men into such impressions. If there be anything, in fact, wherein the views of God and the impressions of men are apt to be at total variance, it is in respect to the solemnity and importance of ordinary duties. The hurtfulness of mistake here, is of course very great. Trying always to do great things, to have extraordinary occasions every day, or to produce extraordinary changes, when small ones are quite as much needed, ends, of course, in defeat and dissipation. It produces a sort of religion in the gross, which is no religion in particular. H. B.

Single-mindedness, or simple-mindedness, is a characteristic of childhood; and child-likeness is the standard of greatness for the disciple of Jesus. A strong thinker, and a child-like looker for God and for God's truth, has said: "The simplest things, after all, are the hardest, apparently, for people to see. They are looking, like Naaman, for great biddings or teachings. I am glad Jesus thanked the Father, as he did after John's disciples had come to Him from their master, that God had revealed these things to babes. I want to be numbered among those babes, whose eyes, unambitious or unable to see perplexities, are content with lovingly looking at the simplicities which there are in Christ." S. S. T.

**15-19.** *Naaman's noble confession, and consecration to the God of Israel.* A radical spiritual transformation is wrought with the physical. He is no longer a proud heathen prince, but an humble believer in the God who has achieved

this double miracle in himself. *Now* he knows that God had directed Elisha's act and message; that God had effected the cure. Thus "believing in his heart," he instantly returns to Samaria (thirty miles), makes "confession with his mouth," and desires to leave an offering in token of his gratitude and devotion. The confession Elisha gladly heard. The offering, though presented in a right spirit, and with *no thought of making recompense*, he declined. Neither himself nor the simple schools over which he presided needed such help. Whatever was required beyond the returns of their own toil was readily supplied by the few godly households of Israel.

With the confession of Jehovah as the only true God, Naaman declares his allegiance to this only Lord. Him alone will he worship and serve. He is not, indeed, fully aware of the spiritual character of true worship and the utter singleness of true service. The two requests he makes show this. First, he asks for a gift of earth enough from the enclosure of Elisha's dwelling, to construct with it an altar to Jehovah in his own house. *This* request, so natural to one of his training, Elisha tacitly declines, thus indirectly instructing him in the spirituality of acceptable worship. The *second* request (18) shows the sincerity of his confession, and the thorough honesty of the man's nature. Uninstructed as he was, both conscience and heart told him that even an outward seeming of worship to his master's God was wrong. Foreseeing this great hindrance in the way of his purposed confession of Jehovah, he brings the matter to Jehovah's prophet for counsel. In his civil capacity as the king's personal attendant, when the king himself bows down and all his attendants, would it be wrong for him, not in worship but in simple courtesy and obedience, to bow with the king? This nice point Elisha does not decide. He neither allows nor forbids. But he puts the doing or not doing upon the same conscience, *now* stirred at the anticipation, afterward to be more fully enlightened by the arousing Spirit. He knows the man is true and earnest, and means faithfully to serve the God of Israel. Such a man, he knows, will be guided and taught, and kept steadfast too, by the Spirit of God who has won him. Since *He has given life, He will give light.* So without mistrust or anxiety concerning his future, Elisha dismisses the humble, grateful Syrian general with the benediction of God's peace! B.

**15. And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company.** It is

not always seen what this involved. It involved going out of his way at least fifty miles. At the Jordan, Naaman was on his way home, had accomplished a fourth part of his return journey; in three more days he would be in Damascus, in his own palace. But he feels that it would be an unworthy act to accept his cure and make no acknowledgment of it, having turned away from the prophet "in a rage" (verse 12), now, without apology, or retraction, or expression of regret or gratitude, to return into his own country under the obligation of an inestimable benefit. His cure has wrought in him not merely a revulsion of feeling from rage and fury to thankfulness, but a change of belief. It has convinced him that the God of Elisha is the God of the whole earth. It has turned him from a worshipper of Rimmon into a worshipper of Jehovah. He must proclaim this. He must let the prophet know what is in his heart. He must, if possible, induce him to accept a recompense. Therefore he thinks nothing of an outlay of time and trouble, but retraces his steps to the Israelite capital, taking with him all his company, his horses and his chariots, his gold and silver and bales of clothing, and numerous train of attendants. **And came, and stood before him**—*i. e.*, descended from his chariot, and asked admittance into the prophet's house, and was received and allowed an audience—a striking contrast with his previous appearance before the house, in expectation that the prophet would come down and wait upon him. **And he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.** This is an acknowledgment of the sole supremacy of Jehovah on the part of a heathen, such as we scarcely find elsewhere. The general belief of the time, and indeed of antiquity, was that every land had its own god, who was supreme in it—Baal in Phœnicia, Chemosh in Moab, Moloch in Ammon, Rimmon in Syria, Bel or Bel-Merodach in Babylon, Amun-Ra in Egypt, etc., and when there is an acknowledgment of Jehovah on the part of heathens in Scripture, it is almost always the recognition of him as a god—the God of the Jews or of the Israelites, one among many. But here we have a plain and distinct recognition of Him as the one and only God that is in all the earth. *Hammond.*

**16.** In this particular case Elisha felt that he would be unfaithful to the God whom he served if he accepted anything. It might lead Naaman to think that he had purchased that blessing, which God bestowed as a free gift of

undeserved mercy. It might lead him to think that the prophets of God were influenced by mercenary motives in granting their aid, like the magicians and soothsayers of the heathen. Hence Elisha refused to accept a gift which was thus capable of being misunderstood. **And he urged him to take it; but he refused.** It was creditable to Naaman that he pressed the prophet to accept his token of gratitude; it was equally creditable to Elisha that he would not take it. W. H. G.

**17.** Naaman distinctly intimated his conviction that the land of Israel was a sacred soil, seeing that there alone the true God was to be found; and it was for this reason that he desired to possess a portion of its venerated dust. If, therefore, we look to the uses to which the Easterns apply the soil of places accounted holy, it is possible we may hit upon the right reason for Naaman's singular request. To the Mohammedans at the present day the sacred soil is that of Mecca; and the man accounts himself happy who has in his possession the smallest portion of it for use in his devotions. He carries it about his person in a small bag; and in his prayers he deposits this before him upon the ground in such a manner that, in his frequent prostrations, the head comes down upon this morsel of sacred soil—so that in some sort he may be said to worship thereon. May it not be that Naaman contemplated forming, with this larger portion of the soil of the sacred land, a spot on which he might offer up his devotions to the God of Israel? *Kitto.*

**18, 19.** It seems that it was Naaman's duty to attend the king of Syria when he went to pay his idol homage, and as the king leaned upon him with his arm upon his shoulder, and bowed very low, he could not well avoid bending his own body with the king. And he meant to ask whether, if he did this out of duty to his master, and not of reverence to the idol, he should commit sin. It showed great tenderness of conscience in him. If the same question were put to us, we should say that it would depend very much upon circumstances whether it would be right or wrong for Naaman to do this. If he wished to save himself from persecution by a seeming compliance with the idolatries of his country, or if any would suppose him to be still an idolater from that act, then it would undoubtedly be wrong; but if it would not be so taken, nor was done to avoid persecution, but was only an act of duty to his king, there was no harm in it. Now it is evident that Naaman meant no concealment of his new faith. He avowed before all the

company of Syrians who were with him, that he would henceforth worship only Jehovah. And he probably built an altar on his return, and openly worshipped the true God, so that it would be known when he went to the house of Rimmon that he was no idolater. Therefore Elisha said unto him, "Go in peace." *W. H. Lewis.*

All the Syrian court shall know that he sacrificeth upon Israelitish earth to the God of Israel. They shall hear him protest to have neither heart nor knee for Rimmon. If he must go into the house of that idol, it shall be as a servant, not as a suppliant: his duty to his master shall carry him; not his devotion to his master's god: if his master go to worship there; not he: neither doth he say, "When I bow myself to the image of Rimmon;" but, "in the house." He shall bow to be leaned upon, not to adore. Yet had not Naaman thought this a fault he had not craved a pardon. It is not for us to expect a full stature in the cradle of conversion. As nature, so grace rises by many degrees to perfection. Leprosy was in Naaman cured at once; not corruption. The prophet, as glad to see him but thus forward, dismisses him with a civil valediction. *Bp. H.*

Did Elisha accept Naaman's plea? The evidence turns entirely on Elisha's words, "Go in peace." These words are the common form of Oriental leave-taking. They may have been little more than a courteous dismissal. Elisha may have felt that the permission craved by Naaman involved a question of conscience which he was not called upon to resolve. Hence he would not sanction Naaman's want of consistency on the one hand nor condemn it on the other. He declines the office of judge. He leaves conscience to do her work. Who shall say this was not the wisest course to adopt? The prophet saw Naaman's weakness, but he also saw Naaman's difficulty. Put the worst construction on his words, and you will say he evades the question; put the best, and you will say he exercises a wise forbearance. We may fairly ask how far Naaman is to be excused in urging the plea of the text. Superstition mingled with his faith. He was a heathen, only just converted, only newly enlightened. We may excuse Naaman, but we cannot pretend as Christians to make his plea ours or to justify our conduct by his. *Bp. Peronne.*

It is worthy of being noted that the indulgence which Naaman sought for was not denied by Elisha. There is perhaps some-

thing more to be deduced from this than the facile accommodation of these earlier times. There may be instruction in it to us on whom the latter ends of the world have come; and I should feel inclined to see in this history a rebuke of those sticklers for small things who scruple not at great things, who strain at gnats while they swallow camels. *T. C.*

Elisha declared neither that God would nor that he would not forgive Naaman his departure from the path of strict right. He was not called upon to give an answer, since Naaman had not put a question, but had only expressed a wish. His "Go in peace" is to be taken simply as "wishing the departing Syrian the peace of God upon the road." **So he departed from him a little way.** Naaman left the presence of Elisha, quitted Samaria, and had gone a short way on his homeward journey when Gehazi overtook him. Verse 19 is closely connected with verse 20. *Hammond.*

#### *Chief Distinctive Lessons of the Story.*

The subtle interlacing of providential events under God's control is here most happily illustrated. No thought had that marauding Syrian band in securing the little captive of the blessing that would follow to their chief commander. No thought had Naaman's wife in bringing (perhaps by her own choice and purchase) this maid into her household of the healing of her lord. But God's providence led to that particular foray and to the transfer of that captive. He conducted the godly child to the splendid heathen home of Naaman. Thus he wrought out the whole preparation for the ultimate blessing to Naaman and his household, to the kings and people of Israel and Syria, and to multitudes in subsequent ages. And it may be noted, Christ expressly recognizes this incident as illustrating God sovereignty in providence and grace (Luke 4:27).

Here also we read one of the finest, most complete illustrations on record of the vast issues of good resulting from a single kindly and devout impulse—and this in a *youthful* heart. Herself and her parentage nameless and obscure; except for this record, utterly unknown. Yet by her thoughtful, sympathetic kindness she has saved the name and fame of Naaman. Nay more, by her simple helpful instrumentality, Naaman himself was saved. And through her indirect agency, by the Gospel truths disseminated through the story over all the earth, this unknown maiden and her simple, heartfelt

exclamation have been honored of God in the production of blessing to unnumbered souls.

The man of leprous *soul* neither knows his inward defilement nor wants it cured. The *way* of cure—by the sacrifice of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit—makes him a recipient and dependent, therefore his pride rejects it. And the inner experiences he must undergo in the substitution of humility for pride, of submission for self-will, of self-restraint and sacrifice for self-indulgence, are all repelling and painful. And yet in this matter God's voluntary doing and man's required experiences are all worthy of a wise, holy and loving God, while they exalt and ennoble the soul that accepts and conforms to them. For the breaking down of man's natural pride of heart is not humiliating, but exalting. The subjection of man's will to the wiser, better will of God is not enslaving, but ennobling, and principled, helpful self-denial is as consciously elevating as unrestrained, selfish indulgence is degrading. For the lowly, obedient and unselfish heart is a trusting and loving heart. And the possessor of such a heart is the child and heir of God, assured of sufficient grace here, and of abundant glory and joy hereafter!

Men seek to do great things in the pursuit of position, power and gain. But the acquisition of each of these objects is ordinarily secured by gradual advances, by steadiness in regular toil and by successive small undertakings. So it is pre-eminently in the attainment of salvation and with progress in the Christian life. All the *great things* are done by God Himself in the giving of His Son, in the willing sacrifice of Christ and in the mission of the Holy Ghost. Ours is the smaller, simpler work of a receiving and appropriating faith, in the good but the lesser part of a willing glad choice of eternal life. Very simple and clear is the way of attaining this life. It is to come as unto a flowing fountain for the cleansing of sin's defilement, and to receive the new spirit of life in Christ Jesus. B.

There is a distinct parallel between the miracle and the greater miracle which cleanses a sinful heart, in that in both the cure is suspended on simple compliance with the terms, and that, in regard to the Gospel healing, the sole condition of being cleansed is to let Christ cleanse us. "Wash and be clean" is the one call of Christ's love. It was not easy to provide that all-cleansing fountain. To do so required the mystery of Incarnation and the agony of Calvary; but, being provided, all else is simple. Jesus has done all, and we have

but to accept what is done. "Wash and be clean" is a command shadowing forth "the soul-quickening words, Believe and live."

We have our Lord's authority for seeing in this story of Naaman at least some of the principles which regulate the dispensation of His love and grace, exemplified for the world. He alleges it as an instance of the way in which the universal love overleaped all national distinctions, and surged over the barriers which Jewish narrowness would have erected for its free course. "None of them were cleansed, save Naaman, the Syrian." A. M.

#### LEPROSY INFLICTED UPON GEHAZI.

*Verses 20-27.*

Mercy and judgment both find place in God's dispensations. The history of Naaman is a signal instance of God's free mercy granted to a stranger who was not of the chosen race—who came, not only from a foreign land, but from one which was frequently in open hostility to Israel. It shows that even in that restricted economy God's grace was not confined to one favored people; but they who sought Him, from whatever land and whatever nation, might find Him and receive rich blessings from His hand. But to this bestowment of God's favor upon an alien there is a reverse picture—the infliction of just judgment upon an offender who was not only one of the chosen race, an Israelite, but who was specially privileged as belonging to the household of the prophet. This shows that descent from Abraham and connection with the commonwealth of Israel are not of themselves a sure passport to the Divine favor. It is an anticipation of the truth that many shall come from the East and West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out. W. H. G.

**20.** *The temptation of Gehazi, and the fall.* Gehazi is to be classed with Judas and with Ananias and Sapphira, rather than with Achan or Simon Magus. Unlike the true servants of the heathen Naaman, he was a false servant of the Lord's prophet. They had no means of knowledge and grace. A professed follower of Jehovah, he had the fulness of the knowledge then possessed and the grace then given. More privileged he, than even the other sons of the prophets, by his *special relation to Elisha*. Therefore the words by which he is here characterized, "Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, the man of God," convey a peculiar sadness and



solemnity in connection with his fearful crime. Like Judas and Ananias, he belonged to the fellowship of the Lord's disciples. By this his guilt was aggravated, and its effects tended greatly to harm and hinder the Lord's work.

Gehazi said, "I will avail myself of the offers of this despicable Syrian, whom my master has foolishly let go free of cost and sacrifice." While this Jewish servant of Elisha despises Naaman because a heathen, yet his eye and heart are admiringly set upon Naaman's sacks of treasure. But his thought and desire went further than mere possession of some of this treasure. He was already conceiving himself as having olive-yards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and many servants. The money would give him all these, and set him among the rich and distinguished in the land. As Naaman's departing retinue disappeared in the distance, Gehazi's resolve was formed. Strangely enough, too, he binds himself to its execution by a sacred form of oath: "As the Lord liveth." He had already broken the *ninth* and *tenth* Commandments. Now he breaks the *third* as he goes forth to break the *eighth*. He follows after Naaman to rob him under a fraudulent pretence. B.

Naaman, a Syrian, a courtier, a soldier, had many servants, and we read how wise and good they were (verse 13). Elisha, a holy prophet, a man of God, has but one servant, and he proves a base liar. They that heard of Elisha at a distance honored him and got good by what they heard; but he that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom had no good impressions made upon him either by his doctrine or miracles. One would expect that Elisha's servant should be a saint (even Ahab's servant, Obadiah, was), but even Christ Himself had a Judas among His followers. The means of grace cannot give grace. H.

**20. My master hath spared Naaman this Syrian.** The words "this Syrian" are emphatic. Gehazi persuades himself that it is right to spoil a *Syrian*—that is, a Gentile, and an enemy of Israel. **As the Lord liveth.** These words are here a profane oath. It could be no fit occasion for a solemn asseveration. But Gehazi, anxious to make himself believe that he is acting in a proper, and, even, in a religious spirit, does not scruple to introduce one of the most solemn of religious phrases. B. C.

**21, 22. Gehazi's reception, and his request of Naaman.** Recognized at once as the servant of Elisha, he is treated with great respect by the grateful Syrian. Naaman even descends

from his chariot to greet this *supposed messenger* of the prophet. Gehazi at once appropriates this thought of Naaman, and thus begins this complicated series of falsehoods. As with every plan of covetousness for wrong getting, so this one involved many untruths. Elisha had not known of his coming; could not have authorized it, much less have sent him. Elisha had not asked for gifts; nay, had declined them. Gehazi well understood the *principle* which actuated the prophet in declining. Not only did he misinterpret Elisha's conduct, and so throw a stain upon the prophet's character, but what was even more heinous, he was falsifying God's own declarations by the prophet's mouth and act of the utter freeness of His grace. In God's name Elisha had said, I will take no recompense for the blessing. Now Gehazi abuses his position to counteract this Divine announcement. Further, he takes as his own what, as Naaman gives it, is a return for the Divine goodness in healing. Thus Gehazi *robs God* of Naaman's purposed gift to Him, and he *robs Naaman* of so much treasure.

That the man was shrewd appears in the reason and form of his request. Nothing was asked for Elisha himself; but for those under his oversight and care. Yet more, the request is made in view of an *emergency* that has *risen since* Naaman parted with Elisha. In all this fabricated statement he only so far protects Elisha's consistency that his own story may pass muster. As for any *other* care and for any *principle*, the story furnishes no trace.

One thing he overlooked. This was the vast disproportion of the *amount* he asked to the object proposed. But his covetousness would be content with no less, though any score of the sons of the prophets might well have been satisfied with half the sum asked for.

**23, 24. Naaman's gift: where bestowed by Gehazi.** The covetous servant required urging only to keep up the play he was enacting. "Please you to take two talents," said Naaman. Very gladly Gehazi accepted. For in this comparatively vast treasure—equal to the amount paid for the whole city of Samaria—he saw wealth and abundance for life. In his gratitude Naaman also insisted upon sending back two of his servants to carry the bags of silver. But soon as they reached some point in the city, Gehazi took the bags, dismissed the servants, and concealed his ill-gotten wealth in Elisha's house.

**25-27. Elisha and Gehazi. The judgment of leprosy.** Gehazi then resumes his place in attendance upon his master. Elisha's first ques-

tion *ought* to have warned him of *some* knowledge on the prophet's part. It seems designed as an opportunity of voluntary confession and repentance. But the covetous spirit, now enhanced by possession, could not see this possible meaning or purpose in the prophet's question. Still, as he thinks, guarding himself, he replies with a square falsehood. Like Ananias, he thinks to keep his doubly stolen riches, at least without the prophet's knowledge. And in this "Satan" also deceived *him* "to lie to the Holy Ghost."

Elisha's words of arraignment are almost gentle in the reproach they address to his instructed conscience. Yet are they explicit and plain, both respecting Gehazi's act (now denied), and respecting his intended use of his treasure. The prophet's heart was saddened at the occurrences that had just taken place, in the seeking and meeting of Naaman. All the deceit and wickedness of Gehazi, the result of simply yielding to covetous desire, he saw and grieved over. And he knew all the effects of evil to result from this selfish sin of Gehazi, through its unhappy result, possibly upon Naaman and upon Syria, certainly upon Gehazi himself and upon the people of Israel. He saw God's work hindered, God's grace specially dishonored at a time when apostasy widely prevailed. This man *hitherto professing* a lowly life of faith in God, unselfish and truthful, a life then *mainly needed* as the great stay against the inroads of evil, would by his fall shake feeble souls from their hold upon God. He would destroy Elisha's character with the people as a pure true prophet. Nay, he would represent Jehovah himself as having the selfish false spirit of Baal.

All this was involved in the *time* and the *events* then transpiring. Servant as he was, his position with God's prophet and his professed relations with God Himself gave him this tremendous vantage-ground for evil doing. Therefore went forth the judgment of God, at the mouth of Elisha, in the mark of leprosy, borne down to after generations. Dismissed from the prophet's service, Gehazi "went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." But he went as a rich man, openly taking his treasure. He invested it, too, as he had proposed; and we may suppose, from 2 K. 8: 1-6, that his was the exact career depicted by Christ (Luke 12: 13-20). All this is strange, some may think—that God should suffer him to possess this wealth in peace, obtained by fraud and falsehood. But this is precisely what God is suffering to be done by all who have the

purpose and hardihood to do it. For Him to interpose and take away from every man what is dishonestly gotten, would be to revolutionize His ways among men. It would be to interfere seriously with men's own agency and responsibility. It would be prematurely to execute His now waiting judgment. Christ's words apply here, too: "Let both wheat and tares grow unto the judgment."

Like the Pharisees of the Master's time, Gehazi *had his reward*. He enjoyed the wealth and position he had coveted. He was elevated toward Naaman's position. But he had Naaman's curse. This course no waters of the Jordan would ever relieve or remove. Nay, life itself would not bring it to an end; for the true and the terrible leprosy rested upon his selfish, guilty soul. This he alone had brought upon himself. B.

**25. But he went in, and stood before his master.** Gehazi, lest his absence should be noticed, as soon as he had put away the money, sought his master's presence, entering the room casually, as if he had been busied about the house. He was met at once, however, by the plain question which follows. **And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi?** literally, *Whence, Gehazi?* A short, stern, abrupt question. **And he said, Thy servant went no whither.** There was no help for it. One lie necessitates another. Once enter on the devious path, and you cannot say whither it will conduct you. To deceive and plunder a foreigner of a hostile nation probably seemed to Gehazi a trifle, either no sin at all, or a very venial sin. But now he finds himself led on to telling a direct lie to his master, which even he could not have justified to himself.

**26, 27.** The prophet follows Gehazi's thoughts, which had been to purchase, with the money obtained from Naaman, olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, etc., and asks—Was this a time for such proceedings? Keil well explains, "Was this the time, when so many hypocrites pretend to be prophets from selfishness and avarice, and bring the prophetic office into contempt with unbelievers, for a servant of the true God to take money and goods from a non-Israelite. . . that he might acquire property and luxury for himself?" It was evidently a most unfit time. As Thenius says, "In any other case better than in this mightiest thou have yielded to thy desire for gold and goods." *Hammond*.

"Is this a time to receive money and garments, and," which thou ~~has~~ already pur-

chased in thy conceit, "olive-yards and vineyards, and sheep and oxen, and men servants and maid servants?" Did my mouth refuse that thy hands might take? Was I so careful to win honor to my God and credit to my profession by denying these Syrian presents, that thou mightest dash both in receiving them? Was there no way to enrich thyself but by bellying thy master; by disparaging this holy function in the eyes of a new convert? Since thou wouldst needs therefore take part of Naaman's treasure, take part with him in his leprosy; "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed forever."

Oh, heavy talents of Gehazi! Oh, the horror of this one unchangeable suit, which shall never be but loathsomely white, noisomely unclean! How much better had been a light purse and a homely coat, with a sound body, a clear soul! Too late doth that wretched man now find that he hath loaded himself with a curse; that he hath clad himself with shame. His sin shall be read ever in his face, in his seed: all passengers, all posterities shall now say, "Behold the characters of Gehazi's covetousness, fraud, sacrilege!" The act overtakes the word; "He went out of his presence a leper as white as snow." It is a woful exchange that Gehazi hath made with Naaman. Naaman came a leper, returned a disciple; Gehazi came a disciple, returned a leper: Naaman left behind both his disease and money; Gehazi takes up both his money and his disease. Now shall Gehazi never look upon himself but he shall think of Naaman, whose skin is transferred upon him with those talents; and shall wear out the rest of his days in shame and pain and sorrow. This son of the prophets shall more loud and lively preach the justice of God by his face than others by their tongue. *Bp. H.*

His punishment is severe; but his sin was great. The leprosy was a fitting punishment, both because it had been Naaman's, from which obedient reliance on God had set him free, and because of its symbolical meaning, as the type of sin. Gehazi got his coveted money, but he got something else, along with it, which he did not bargain for, and which took all the sweetness out of it. That is always the case. "Ill-gotten gear never prospers;" and if a man has set his heart on worldly good, he may succeed in amassing a fortune, but the leprosy will cleave to him, and his soul will be all crusted and foul with that living death. How many successful men, perhaps high in reputation in the Church as in the world, would stand "lep-

ers as white as snow" if we had God's eyes to see them with? A. M.

Remembering how leprosy in the Bible is always a type of sin and its result, spiritual death—we may ask ourselves, *Dare* we gain riches by unworthy means, when, so gained, they bring moral death with them? When we ask ourselves this question, the punishment of Gehazi, dreadful as it was, does not appear excessive. Still less does it appear so when we consider who Gehazi was. A prophet—Elisha's privileged companion—a man to whom the glory of Jehovah, not only in the sight of Naaman, but of the rebellious people of Israel, ought to have been beyond all things precious, such a one willing to barter all this, to risk the undoing of Elisha's prophetic work for money! The answer of conscience is that it is only just that that servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not should be beaten with many stripes (Luke 12:47). *Houghton.*

*The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death* (Prov. 21:6). Those who get wealth by fraud and injustice cannot expect either the comfort or the continuance of it. What was Gehazi profited, though he gained his two talents, when thereby he lost his health, his honor, his peace, his service, and, if repentance prevented not, his soul forever? His heart (says Bishop Hall) was packed up in Naaman's chests, and he must run after him to fetch it. Multitudes, by coveting worldly wealth, have *erred from the faith, and pierced themselves with many sorrows.* H.

*One sin leads on to another by a sequence which is inevitable.* Gehazi begins with covetousness. He cannot see the wedges of silver and gold and the large bales of rich stuffs without a keen desire to obtain possession of a portion. His master's refusal seems to him mere folly, almost madness. He soon frames a scheme by which his master's intentions shall be frustrated. The scheme involves him in lying; nay, in a whole heap of lies. He tells a circumstantial tale in which there is not a single word of truth. Gehazi obtains even more than he had ventured to ask; hides it away without any difficulty, and thinks that all is over. But all is not over. "Whence comest thou, Gehazi?" He must either confess all or directly and unmistakably lie to his master. *Of course* the lie is resolved upon; his previous conduct has so demoralized him that we cannot even imagine him to have hesitated. The only security against a moral decline as grievous as Gehazi's is not to enter upon it, not to take the first step.

Gehazi's punishment has also its lesson. He was a rich man, and might carry out all his far-reaching schemes of proprietorship and lordship over others. But what will it all profit him if he is to be to the end of his days a leper? The apples of Sodom, so "fair to view," are felt and known to be worthless when they "turn to ashes on the lips." So was it with him; and so is it with those who pursue a course similar to his. The prosperity acquired by fraud has within it a taint of rottenness. There is a drawback of some kind or other which deprives the prosperity of all its value, and makes the wealthy prosperous man a miserable wretch. If he escape external calamity, he will not escape the worm of remorse, which will eat into his heart and poison his cup of pleasure. *Hammond.*

Almost every specific sin or breach of a definite commandment may be traced to the one

controlling spirit of *greed*. *The LOVE of money is a root of ALL evil.* But this root-sin has its source and its life in unbelief and rejection of God. *The unbelieving heart* is a heart supremely controlled by self-interest and self-pleasure, by the spirit of greed.

Gehazi was the Ananias and the Demas of the Old Testament. By his close personal connection with Elisha, he reminds us of Judas. To him Elisha could say, as Peter to Ananias, "Thou hast not lied to men, but to God!" And of him, as Paul of Demas, "He has forsaken me, having loved this present world." And as a signal hindrance, offence and grief to the cause he professedly espoused, his was the same ultimate condemnation.

As the blessing of God maketh rich and addeth no sorrow, so the curse of God goes with ill-gotten gain, even to children's children. B.

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## Section 20.

### ELISHA DELIVERS JEHORAM FROM SYRIAN INVASIONS.

2 KINGS 6 : 8-23.

8 Now the king of Syria warred against Israel; and he took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are coming down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of; and he saved himself there, not once nor twice. And the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, Nay, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber. And he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host with horses and chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. And he led them to Samaria. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? Shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite

them : wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. 23 And he prepared great provision for them : and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

**8-23.** THE chronic hostility which subsisted between the Israelitish and the Syrian kingdoms soon broke out again in war. In this, as in other instances, Syria was the aggressor. The invaded kingdom was delivered, not through "the sword and the bow" (verse 22) of its king, but once more through the interposition of Elisha. J. O.—Incursions, on the side of Syria and of Israel, were of constant occurrence during almost the whole period of the monarchy of Jehoram. "The Syrians went out by companies, and brought away captives out of the land of Israel," and the Israelites no doubt retaliated, and from time to time sent their plundering expeditions into Syria, and took booty and prisoners. But before Jehoram had been on the throne many years a more threatening system of attack was organized by the second Benhadad, and attempts were for a second time made to push the war to extremities, and to effect the subjection of Samaria to the Syrian yoke. The enterprising monarch of Syria led a series of expeditions into the Israelite territory with the hope of surprising and cutting off detachments or of otherwise gaining some considerable advantage ; but his expectations were frustrated after a manner for which he found it hard to account—his designs seemed to be penetrated, his intentions known. Suspecting treachery among his officers, he was met by the assurance that the Syrian ranks harbored no traitor, but that Elisha, by his supernatural powers, was able to penetrate and expose all his plans. Under these circumstances, he sought to obtain possession of Elisha's person ; and having learned that the prophet was residing in a small Israelite town called Dothan, he sent an army thither to take him. Elisha, though angelic hosts surrounded him, was instructed to yield, and obeyed. He induced the Syrians to accompany him to Samaria, under a strange species of illusion ; after which he delivered them over to Jehoram, whose first impulse was to put them to death. This impulse Elisha checked. The king, he said, should rather entertain his prisoners hospitably, release them freely and let them return to their own country. The advice was followed ; and Benhadad appears to have been so far touched by the generous treatment of his soldiers, that for

some considerable space he refrained from further hostilities against the Israelites. But some years later he suddenly invaded Israel and laid siege to Samaria. G. R. (See next Section.)

**8-13.** *Elisha foils the ambuscading schemes of the Syrian king.* At several points successive ambuscades were laid to entrap the king of Israel. But Elisha, by special supernatural vision, faithfully forewarned Jehoram upon each occasion, and the king escaped the peril. Naturally the Syrian king was surprised at the seeming disclosure of his secret plans, and inferred treachery on the part of his own officers. Upon investigation at a called council, he was informed by one who had learned the fact in some way, that Elisha the prophet had revealed all his very thoughts to the king of Israel. At once he sends out spies to discover the place where Elisha was tarrying. They return with the intelligence that he is at Dothan. This was a small town upon a hill, about eleven miles north of Samaria. B.

**8.** *Then the king of Syria warred against Israel.* It may seem strange that, so soon after sending an embassy to the court of Samaria, and asking a favor (chap. 5 : 5, 6), Benhadad should resume hostilities, especially as the favor had been obtained (chap. 5 : 14) ; but the normal relations between the two countries were those of enmity (chap. 5 : 2), and a few years would suffice to dim the memory of what had happened. *Hammond.*

**9.** *And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel—Jehoram (2 K. 3 : 1), or Joram, as he is likewise called (2 K. 8 : 25), the son of Ahab.* How little regard Elisha had for this ungodly monarch is plain from his language to him on a former occasion (2 K. 3 : 13), when he sought the prophet's aid in a time of great peril, and from his speaking of him (2 K. 6 : 32) as "this son of a murderer." And how alienated the king was from the prophet appears not only from the fact that it was not he, but one of his servants, who suggested the application to the prophet when the armies of the three kings were in danger of perishing (2 K. 3 : 11), and that he did not direct Naaman to him until the prophet himself volunteered in the case (2 K. 5 : 8), but that, in the straits to which Samaria was reduced afterward in a siege, instead of soliciting the intercession of the prophet, he

ordered him to be put to death (2 K. 6 : 31). It is perhaps significant that he is here spoken of not by name, but simply by his office. The message of the prophet was addressed to the king of Israel. He was for the time the head and representative of the people of God, and it is for the safety and the welfare of Israel that the prophet is concerned, not for the personal advantage of Joram. W. H. G.

Elisha is a thousand scouts. He sends word to the king of Israel of the projects, of the removes, of his enemy. More than once had Jehoram saved both his life and his host by these close admonitions. It is well that in something yet a prophet may be obeyed. What strange state-service was this which Elisha did, besides the spiritual ! The king, the people of Israel owe themselves and their safety to a despised prophet ! The man of God knew and felt them idolaters ; yet how careful and vigilant is he, for their rescue ! If they were bad, yet they were his own ; if they were bad, yet not all ; God had His number among their worst : if they were bad, yet the Syrians were worse. The Israelites misworshipped the true God ; the Syrians worshipped a false. That if it were possible he might win them, he will preserve them ; and if they will needs be wanting to God, yet Elisha will not be wanting to them : their impiety shall not make him undutiful. *Bp. H.*

**12.** *And one of his servants said, Nay, my lord, O king : but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber :* The cure of Naaman's leprosy was doubtless widely known in Syria. Such a miracle wrought upon the general of the army and the favorite of the king could not be a secret. And many other evidences of Elisha's supernatural power may also have been generally reported. W. H. G.

**14, 15.** *The encompassing Syrian host, and the servant's great fear.* Secretly and by night this little city was invested by a considerable company of Syrians, with horses and chariots and footmen. This great company of hostile warriors met the gaze of Elisha's new and untried servant, as he went forth early in the morning upon the wall. The imminence of the peril pressed sorely upon his inexperienced heart, and with small faith in God or His prophet, he hastens with the alarming news to Elisha. Yet had he some faith with his fear ; for he asks, "How shall we do?"

**16, 17.** *The answer and the prayer of Elisha.* Calm and undaunted in spirit, with the unwavering courage of implicit faith in Jeho-

vah, Elisha hears his servant's appeal. And quietly he assures the young man of God's absolute invincible protection. *He* sees the gathered hosts of God, outnumbering far the human array and girded with the might of omnipotence, now as ever interposed for his deliverance. How sublime the contrast here of human fear and human faith—fear of man and faith in God ! In this we read the first grand lesson of the incident.

But Elisha adds to his assurance a fervent prayer for the same elevation of faith to be imparted to his servant. He asks that a *spiritual vision* may be given to the mind of the man. And there, as he stood in the prophet's secluded chamber, the Lord gifted him with supernatural mental vision. To the *actual* scene he had just beheld, now reproduced upon the eye of the mind, the Divine Spirit added a sublime picture of a vaster host of fiery chariots intervening between Elisha and his foes—a multitude filling the city, and the hill upon which it lay. The end of the vision was the enlargement and confirmation of the man's faith. And this is the second grand lesson of the incident under review. Faith comes through the spiritual vision of God. The power of spiritual sight is imparted by His Spirit. The Holy Ghost alone unseals the eyes of the understanding, to behold the wondrous things of God—of His law, of His grace and love. The marshalled hosts of God were around Elisha, but the young man saw them not until a Divine illumination was imparted to him. So the sublime facts of God's presence, of His providence and redemption—all truths disclosed in type and history, in psalm and prophecy in the Old Testament, and fulfilled by Christ and the Holy Spirit—all have intense reality. But the sense of that reality comes alone through the apprehension of faith. And the vision of faith is the gift of God. It is the work of His quickening, illuminating Spirit. And this Divine gift is bestowed, this Divine work inwrought in every soul, in answer to the prayer of those who, like Elisha, already believe and live. B.

Elisha's servant quakes at the Syrian army, no fear invades the prophet. He saw, and caused his man to see, a greater Deliverer above. So it is with men in the time of trouble ; if their eyes be fixed on earth, their enemies appear great, and God that is so high seems little. Let our eyes be in heaven, and from thence look down upon our enemies, God will then appear mighty, our foes weak and contemptible. *Adams.*

**16.** *Fear not : for they that be with us are*

more than they that be with them, is the perfectly fearless word of Elisha at Dothan. It gets echo and emphasis in Paul's perfectly fearless word at Corinth: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Old Testament and New Testament agree in this, that a true faith allies us to God. And alliance with God means majority and might and victory. *H. Johnson.*

As stood the prophet with his servant in the midst of two opposing hosts, gathered for his destruction and deliverance, so stands every human soul. In the midst of two opposing hosts, both of whom, the enemies as well as friends, are invisible save to the vision of faith, a vision divinely given in answer to prayer. Satan and his hosts of evil daily, hourly arrayed against me. God and His hosts of good daily, hourly arrayed for me. This is the one grand reality of our life against which our eyes are closed, the reality which God alone can enable us to behold. *B.*

There is no contrast in modern life so great as the contrast between the two standards under which the whole world ranges itself to-day. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan—these two stand over against each other in irreconcilable hostility; and yet the subjects of both meet and intermingle in the world, often without knowing to which of the two kingdoms one another belongs. The two kingdoms are spiritual kingdoms, and their soldiers do not always wear a visible uniform by which they may be distinguished. But the distinction, though not always visible, is there; and its consequences reach into eternity. No other contrast of life matters so much—whether we are rich or poor, ignorant or intelligent, refined or uncultivated, is a question which may chiefly affect this life; but the distinction between God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom is one whose consequences will affect each of us untold ages after the other contrasts of this life shall have been forgotten. *H. C. T.*

17. Some have tried to explain away the record of spiritual appearances as due to the natural surroundings of romantic scenery working on an excited imagination. Dothan lends itself to no such fantastic solution. A wide, rich plain, lying on the natural highway from Syria across Jordan by Bethshean to Samaria, with a smooth, round-topped hill at its southeastern edge, beneath which is a copious spring, precious to the shepherds, and many dry cisterns, into one of which Joseph may have been cast, lends no aid to the imagination. The ancient city, now marked by grass-grown mounds, covered the summit of the hill. On its slopes

the Syrians could not camp. They beleaguered it by encircling it with their camp on the rising ground beyond the base of the mount. It was on the open space all round the city that the hosts of Jehovah were revealed interposing between Benhadad's troops and the prophet.

*Tristram.*

The horses and chariots mean warlike force. Still, what the servant sees is not a material, it is a spiritual reality, taking a form which assures him of God's sure protection, through the agencies of these ministers of His who do His pleasure, and at a time when all was dark to the eye of flesh. *Liddon.*—The servant of Elisha, until his eye was divinely opened, saw nothing but the hosts of the enemy surrounding Dothan and cutting off escape; but as soon as Divine light fell on him, he beheld a new spiritual world. He was now the enlightened one, the man of opened eyes; while the Syrians, who gloried in their strength, were smitten with blindness, and led captive by a single unarmed man. His mind had drawn in a great lesson. The chariots of fire, indeed, and horses of fire, were, in one sense, unreal; that is, they were not of flesh, nor obvious to human sense: they were unearthly powers, who assumed a form by which they could make an impression of truth on the distrustful, fleshly mind of the prophet's servant. There were no chariots there, nor horses; but there were spiritual hosts, who showed themselves before the imagination of the young man to be more than a match for the army of besiegers. Thus a great truth from heaven, a reality as lasting and as wide as the universe, was taught him, that, beyond our eyes and ears, a majestic, spiritual world is moving on in silence; that an unseen God has infinite, unscen resources; that the causes and issue of things lie outside of the horizon of the senses; that immense agencies may be at work in all stillness and without the slightest show, of which the worldly mind does not so much as dream. If there are hosts of foes of God, there is a God of hosts above them. *T. D. W.*

In the state of light the soul can see that to which it was previously quite blind. The prophet's servant imagined that his master and himself were left alone, but when his eyes were opened he saw the mountain to be filled with chariots and horses of fire. As great a wonder is often wrought in our own days. A man is living among us seeing nothing beyond a contracted circle of earth and earthly interests—thinking, perhaps, that few care for him, and that he needs to look to no one but himself—

that he is isolated and alone or almost so—but the Spirit touches him, the scales fall from his eyes, the curtain is withdrawn from the spiritual world, and the intense light of Divine truth, with gradual dawn or sudden flash, lights up the amphitheatre by which he is surrounded, and he beholds that he is in the midst of eternities—at once a spectacle to and a spectator of another and grander universe. *R. Flint.*

The Gospel comes to recreate and strengthen our faith in things and persons unseen and eternal; it comes to rebridge the great gulf which we have fixed between the seen and temporal, and the unseen and eternal, and to draw us in thought and affection over the bridged chasm. It comes to make real and substantial to us the invisible. It seeks to make us walk by faith, not by sight—to live for, fight for, work and suffer and die for invisible interests and beings; and to reveal them (if that were possible) would be to subvert its objects. Our invisible helpers must remain invisible. They are here. They are real. We need but a spiritual vision, an all-conquering faith to see them, to realize their presence, to banish our fears, to make us ever calm and serene. Faith says in all the way, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." *J. Drummond.*

This manifestation has several features of resemblance to that given to Jacob in his most defenceless hour, when he saw beside his unprotected camp of women and children "God's host," and in a rapture of thankful wonder named the place "Mahanaim"—"Two Camps." The sight teaches us that God's messengers are ever near, and then most near when needed most. It tells us, too, that they come in the form needed. They are warriors when we are ringed about by foes, counsellors when we are perplexed, comforters when we mourn. Their shapes are as varied as our needs, and ever correspond to "the present distress." They come in power sufficient to conquer. There was force enough circling the prophet to have annihilated all the Syrians. True, they did not draw their celestial swords, but they were there, and their presence was enough for the triumphant faith of the guarded men. What living thing could come through that wall of fire? Our eyes are blinded, and we need to have them cleared. We look so constantly at the things seen that we have no sight for the unseen. Worldliness, sin, unbelief, sense and its trifles, time and its transitorinesses, blind the eyes of our mind; and we need

those of sense to be closed, that these may open. The truest vision is the vision of faith. It is certain, direct and conclusive. The world says, "Seeing is believing;" the Gospel says, "Believing is seeing." If we would but live near to Jesus Christ, pray to Him to touch our blind eyeballs, and turn away from the dazzling unrealities which sense brings, we should find Him "the Master-light of all our seeing," and be sure of the eternal, invisible things with an assurance superior to that given by the keenest sight in the brightest sunshine. When we are blind to earth, we see earth glorified by angel presences, and fear and despair and helplessness and sorrow flee away from our tranquil hearts. If, on the other hand, we fix our gaze on earth and its trifles, there will generally be more to alarm than to encourage, and we shall do well to be afraid, if we do not see, as in such a case we shall certainly not see, the fiery wall around us, behind which God keeps His people safe. *A. M.*

Prayer is a cold and heartless thing in numbers of instances because men see nothing of Him to whom prayer is addressed, nothing of God, nothing of Jesus, nothing of the spirit-world around the throne, nothing of the majesty, the beauty, the glory which encircles God, such as is possible, really possible to our finite and purblind gaze—nothing of the everlasting worship which surrounds Him, nothing of the ministers of His that do His pleasure. *Liddon.*

**18.** *The investing company of Syrians smitten with blindness at the prayer of Elisha.* With his now assured servant Elisha goes down to the Syrian camp in the plain below. As he approaches his prayer is uttered, "Smite this people, I pray Thee, with blindness." For his servant he had asked *sight*, a clear, mental impression of things invisible. Upon this Syrian cohort he prays that a mental delusion or bewilderment (concerning things visible) may fall. Not a bodily blindness, but such a dazing of the senses as utterly to bewilder and paralyze the ordinary judgment. The object of Elisha was to hinder their recognition of him, and to lead them (as he did) to Samaria. And *this* prayer of Elisha, also, was instantly answered. The Lord smote the Syrians with such blindness, and thus prepared the way for Elisha's further interposition in behalf of Israel. *B.*

He that prayed for the opening of his servant's eyes to see his safeguard prays for the blinding of his enemies, that they might not see to do hurt. As the eyes of Elisha's servant were so shut that they saw not the angels when they saw the Syrians, so the eyes of the Syrians



shall be likewise shut, that when they see the man they shall not see the prophet. To all other objects their eyes are clear : only to Elisha they shall be blind—blind, not through darkness, but through misknowledge. They shall see and mistake both the person and place. *Bp. H.*

**19-23.** Going boldly into their midst he bids them follow him to the city where the man they seek has his dwelling. Then he leads them eleven miles to Samaria. Whatever question may be raised respecting the precise truthfulness of the prophet's assertion to them, finds its *most* satisfactory solution in these two facts : that *God seems to have directed the prophet's action* in the whole matter ; and that Elisha's *use* of his simple stratagem intimates a kind temper and purpose toward the Syrians. When their blinding bewilderment was removed, at Elisha's prayer, they found themselves captives in the midst of the capital city, Samaria. Jehoram would then have fallen upon and destroyed them. But the prophet nobly rebukes the king. "Thou wouldst not slay those thou overcomest in fair conflict. Much less shouldst thou harm these whom God has put in thy power. Rather treat them kindly and generously ; and release them to their master." Yet these Syrians had been exclusively seeking this very prophet. There was prudence and policy, as well as kindness and nobleness, in Elisha's conduct. His generous treatment, together with their own sharp experience, served to put a stop at least for a time to the warfare against Israel. *B.*

**19.** Justly now might Elisha say, "This is not the way, neither is this the city," wherein Elisha shall be descried. He was in Dothan : but not as Elisha. He shall not be found but in Samaria, neither can they have any guide to him but himself. No sooner are they come into the streets of Samaria, than their eyes have leave to know both the place and the prophet. The first sight they have of themselves is in the trap of Israel. *Bp. H.*

Elisha meant the Syrians to understand him to say, "This is not the way which ye ought to have taken if ye wanted to capture the prophet Elisha, and this is not the city (Dothan) where he is to be found." And so the Syrians understood him. In the morality of the time, and, indeed, in the morality of all times up to the present, it has been held to be justifiable to deceive a public enemy. **Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.** It could only be through the miraculous delu-

sion for which Elisha had prayed, and which had been sent, that the Syrians believed the first comer in an enemy's country, followed him to the capital without hesitation, and allowed him to bring them inside the walls. But for the delusion they would have suspected, made inquiries of others, and retreated hastily, as soon as the walls and towers of Samaria broke on their sight.

**20. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw ; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.** Their delusion was dispelled—they returned to their proper senses, and, seeing the size and strength of the town, recognized the fact that they were in Samaria, their enemy's capital, and so were helpless. *Hammond.*

Elisha, in promising to bring them to the man whom they wanted, undertook no more than he performed. Only when the Lord opened their eyes, they found they were not in Dothan, but in Samaria. This is one way in which God frequently discomfits wicked men, pouring confusion into their counsels. They "grope for the wall, like the blind, and grope as if (they) had no eyes : (they) stumble at noonday as in the night ; (they) are in desolate places as dead men" (Isa. 59 : 10). They are granted the desires of their hearts, but after a fashion of God's own ; and in such a way as to lead to their final discomfiture. *J. O.*

**22.** "Thou shalt not smite them : wouldst thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow?" As if he said, "These are God's captives, not thine ; and if they were thine own, their blood could not be shed without cruelty. If it be victory thou aimest at, overcome them with kindness ; set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink." Oh, noble revenge of Elisha, to feast his persecutors ! To provide a table for those who had provided a grave for him ! These Syrians came to Dothan full of bloody purposes to Elisha ; he sends them from Samaria full of good cheer. Thus should a prophet punish his pursuers. No vengeance but this is heroic, and fit for Christian imitation ; "If thine enemy hunger, give him bread to eat : if he thirst, give him water to drink, and the Lord shall reward thee." *Bp. H.*

**23.** Faith in God puts enemies in our hands, but not for vengeance. Elisha in the might of his faith captures those who sought to capture

him, and in capturing their persons he would capture their hearts. He has them treated by his king with kindness, and then, unharmed, they are sent back to their master, taught that the God of Elisha and of Israel is not only a mighty but a gracious and forgiving God. This is faith's way. It "worketh by love." *H. Johnson.*

The king of Israel hath done that by his feast which he could not have done by his sword. The bands of Syria will no more come by way of ambush or incursion into the bounds of Israel. *Bp. H.*—The Syrian raids, which had hitherto been frequent, perhaps almost continuous (chap. 5 : 2), now ceased for a time, and the kingdom of Israel had a respite. *Hammond.*

The incident impressively illustrates the sublime expression of Paul in 2 Cor. 4 : 17, 18. The unseen agencies of the eternal world ever surround the believer. He abides under the shadow of the Almighty. He is entrenched within the impregnable camp and guarded by the invisible cohorts of God. With clear, high thoughts of this encompassing Divine presence, whom can he fear? "If God be for him, who can be against him?" Only let him look more steadfastly and trustingly upon the things which are not seen, only let him realize that he is "kept by the power of God," and, like Elisha he shall abide calm and undaunted in the

midst of the beleaguering hosts of evil, assured of daily deliverance through the period of continuing peril, and at length of "an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

The incident further discloses the privilege and office of the clear-visioned and strong-hearted believer in behalf of the feeble-sighted, the fearful and faint in spirit. Not only by his example, but by his fervent prayer, may the believing soul help to impart vision and reinforce the courage and faith of the half-seeing, the timid, and the doubting. What Elisha achieved by his prayer for his servant may be accomplished by every Elisha-like disciple according to the measure of his faith in God's promise and working.

Further, in the opening of the eyes of the prophet's servant, and in the dimming of the vision of the prophet's foes, we find an effective illustration of Christ's words in John 9 : 39. "I am come into the world," He said, "that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind." To those who know and feel their spiritual darkness, who desire and gladly welcome Him as the light of life, He imparts the clear vision and the blessed experience of faith. But from the spiritually blind who think they see, who therefore reject His offered light, He withholds all quickening grace. Thus, in judgment, the darkness is sealed upon their hearts forever. B.

## Section 21.

### SIEGE AND DELIVERANCE OF SAMARIA—ELISHA AND JEHORAM.

2 KINGS 6 : 24-33 ; 7 : 1-20.

6 : 24 AND it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and 25 went up, and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria : and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore *pieces* of silver, and the fourth part 26 of a kab of dove's dung for five *pieces* of silver. And as the king of Israel was passing by 27 upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee ? out of the threshing-floor, or out 28 of the wine-press ? And the king said unto her, What aileth thee ? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my 29 son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him : and I said unto her on the next day, 30 Give thy son, that we may eat him : and she hath hid her son. And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes ; (now he was passing by upon the wall ;) and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh. 31 Then he said, God do so to me, and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall

32 stand on him this day. But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold the door fast against him: is not the sound of his 33 master's feet behind him? And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him; and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD; why should I wait for the 7: 1 LORD any longer? And Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD: thus saith the LORD, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two meas- 2 ures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

8 Now there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to 4 another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall 5 live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the outermost part of the camp of 6 the Syrians, behold, there was no man there. For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, 7 and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and 8 fled for their life. And when these lepers came to the outermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and they came back, and entered into another tent, and carried thence 9 also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, punishment will 10 overtake us: now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but the horses 11 tied, and the asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they 12 told it to the king's household within. And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we be hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, 13 When they come out of the city, we shall take them alive, and get into the city. And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it; behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are consumed :) and 14 let us send and see. They took therefore two chariots with horses; and the king sent 15 after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in 16 their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king. And the people went out, and spoiled the camp of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and 17 two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. And the king appointed the captain on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died as the man of God had said, who spake when the 18 king came down to him. And it came to pass, as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall 19 be to-morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria; and that captain answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? and he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof: 20 it came to pass even so unto him; for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

*The siege of Samaria.* Unwarned by the failure of previous attempts, Benhadad was soon engaged in a new war on Israel. The fresh invasion was made the occasion of fresh deliverance, more wonderful than any of the preceding, but not before Samaria

had been reduced to the most desperate straits. J. O.

A considerable interval succeeded the inroad of the Syrian bands, recounted in the preceding section. But at length the same king Benhadad comes against Israel with a great army. Through a plundered and wasted country, he reaches, surrounds, and lays siege to the capital city. The siege is protracted until there is great famine in Samaria. Jehoram, excited with the suffering of the people, becomes enraged against Elisha. Either he thought that Elisha's threats and prayers had brought the sore evil upon them, or that the prophet had forborne to use his prevalent intercession with God for their relief. He does *not* realize that *his* and his *people's* sins have brought upon them humiliation and calamity. These sins were the proper objects of his wrath, and not the good prophet. The messenger sent by Jehoram to kill Elisha was arrested by command of the foreseeing prophet. At the same moment the king himself comes in to Elisha with a bitter complaint against Jehovah. Then the prophet speaks words of hope and promise, which are only doubtingly received by the king and his attendants.

On that very afternoon deliverance came by miracle, from God alone. He used an empty sound—as harmless a thing as can be conceived—sending it through the air on either side the Syrian camp. Simply the *noise* of great hosts advancing from afar struck the besieging army with an utter overwhelming panic. Not only did they flee on the instant, but to give completeness to God's deliverance and supply to Israel, they left behind the horses and asses upon which they might more swiftly and safely have fled. The discovery was made by four lepers outside the city gate. With starvation on every other side, they determine to trust the mercy of the Syrians. They find absolute silence and desertion in the rich and splendid camp. After satisfying their hunger and securing abundance of gold and silver and raiment, late in the evening they make their way back to the city gate and tell their story. The porters carried the tale to those that were within, and so it reached the king. B.

While Jehoram paid a certain amount of respect to Elisha, as the prophet of Jehovah, he nevertheless allowed the worship of Baal to continue in the capital (chap. 10 : 18-28), if not elsewhere, and maintained the calf worship also at Dan and Bethel (chap. 3 : 3). He had suffered himself to be guided by Elisha in re-

spect of the Syrian prisoners captured by the prophet (verse 23), and had evidently been in communication with him on the subject of the present siege, had probably been exhorted by him to repentance, and promised that, if he would wait upon Jehovah, in due time there should be deliverance. The prophet's words had made some impression on him ; he had to a certain extent turned to God, had put sackcloth upon his loins, not ostentatiously, but secretly (verse 30), had borne the privations of the siege without murmuring, had refused to surrender the town, and looked to Jehovah to deliver it. But there was no depth in his penitence, no surrender of the heart and the will to God, no firm and rooted faith in God's truthfulness and in the certain accomplishment of His promises. A single incident of the siege—a horrible one certainly, but not without a parallel in other sieges—shattered the whole fabric of his repentance and his resolution, turned him against the prophet and against Jehovah, caused him to threaten the prophet's life, and to make up his mind that he would follow his own course and not wait for the Lord any longer (verse 38). He thus revealed the true state of his heart and soul, showed his spiritual unsoundness, revealed himself as one whose character was rotten at the core, who had never turned to Jehovah in sincerity and truth. What wonder, then, that God had not granted the deliverance promised to true faith and true penitence, that a half repentance had not availed with Him ? So it had been with Ahab ; so it would always be with all those who, after Jehoram's example, should be half-hearted in religion, should at once "fear the Lord and serve their own gods" (chap. 17 : 38)—own for masters both God and mammon. A half repentance is useless. Nothing avails but to turn to God with all the heart and all the soul and all the strength. *Hammond.*

24. *And it came to pass after this*—probably some considerable time after, when the memory of Jehoram's kind act had passed away—that *Benhadad king of Syria gathered all his host*. A contrast is intended between the inroads of small bodies of plunderers and the invasion of the territory by the monarch himself at the head of his entire force. *And went up*. However Samaria was approached from Syria, there must always have been a final ascent, either from the Jordan valley or from the Plain of Esdraelon. *And besieged Samaria*. Josephus says that Jehoram was afraid to meet Benhadad in the open field, since his forces were no match for those of the Syrian king, and therefore at once shut him-

self up within his capital, without risking a battle. The walls of Samaria were very strong.

**28. And the king said unto her, What alleth thee?** Probably, as Bähr suggests, the woman explained to the king that she did not appear before him to beg food, but to claim his interposition as judge in a case in which she considered herself to be wronged. Such an appeal the king was bound to hear; and he therefore asks, "What alleth thee?"—*i.e.*, "What is thy ground of complaint?" Then she tells her story. *Hammond.*

**33.** It has been proposed to change "messenger" into "king," the two words being in Hebrew nearly alike, and the speech with which the chapter ends being only suitable in the mouth of the king, whose presence is moreover indicated in verses 2 and 17 of the next chapter. Jehoram bursts into the prophet's presence with a justification of the sentence he has pronounced against him. "Behold this evil—this siege with all its horrors—is from Jehovah—from Jehovah, whose prophet thou art. Why should I wait for Jehovah—temporize with Him—keep, as it were, on terms with Him by suffering thee to live—any longer? What hast thou to say in arrest of judgment?" B. C.

**7: 1, 2.** The separation of these verses from the preceding narrative is most unfortunate. They are an integral part of it, and form its climax. In answer to the king's attempt upon his life, and hasty speech in which he has threatened to renounce Jehovah, Elisha is commissioned to proclaim that the siege is on the point of terminating, the famine about to be within twenty-four hours succeeded by a time of plenty. There is thus no reason for the king's despair or anger. *Hammond.*

The promise came from Elisha when all seemed desperate. The wonderfully vivid narrative in the previous chapter, tells a pitiful tale of women boiling their children, of unclean food worth more than its weight in silver, of a king worked up to a pitch of frenzy and murderous designs, and renouncing his allegiance to Jehovah. Elisha had counselled resistance, and the woman's story was the result. "God do so to himself, and more also, if the prophet's head stood on him an hour longer." He could blame the prophet, but all his sorrow had not taught him the first step toward a better mind by blaming himself. Meanwhile Elisha was quietly sitting in his house with the elders of the city, who had come, we may suppose, to take counsel with

him. Suddenly turning to them, he told them that the king—a true son of Ahab, the murderer of the prophets and of Naboth, and himself now bent on murder—had sent a messenger to behead him. They must refuse him admission; for the king would be sorry for his command as soon as he had given it, and would follow in haste to prevent its execution. It was indeed so. While the soldiers still parleyed with the elders outside the door, the king appeared, his fury gone, his spirit changed. "Behold," said he to Elisha, "this evil is of the Lord. He has willed that we open the gates to the Syrian. Why should I wait for deliverance any longer?" The horrors he had heard seemed to tell him that hope of aid from God was vain; that surrender was inevitable. What had the prophet to say? "Hear the word of the Lord," replied he. "To-morrow, about this time, a seah—that is, a peck—of fine flour will be sold for a shekel, and two pecks of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria." "What!" said the officer on whom the king leaned, "if God make windows in heaven, and rain down flour and barley, that may be, but not otherwise." "You will see it," answered Elisha, "but will taste neither." . . . Note the precision and confidence of the promise. The hour of the fulfilment and the price of flour and the cheaper barley are stated. Man's promises are vague; God's are specific. Mark, too, the entire silence of the promise as to the mode of its fulfilment. Probably Elisha knew as little as any one how it was going to be accomplished. The particularity and vagueness combined are remarkable. A. M.

**3-16.** The mode in which Elisha's prophecy of relief and deliverance was fulfilled is now set forth. Four lepers, excluded from the city, and on the point of perishing of hunger, felt that they could be no worse off, and might better their condition, if they deserted to the Syrians. They therefore drew off from the city at nightfall, and made for the Syrian camp. On arriving, they found it deserted. The entire host, seized with a sudden panic, had fled about the time that they began their journey. The lepers' first thought was to enrich themselves by plunder; but after awhile it occurred to them that, unless they hastened to carry the good news to Samaria, inquiry would be made, their proceedings would be found out, and they would be severely punished. So they returned to the capital, and reported what they had discovered. Jehoram, on receiving the news, feared that the Syrians had prepared a trap for him, and declined to

move. He consented, however, to send out scouts to reconnoitre. The scouts found evident proof that the entire army had actually fled and was gone, whereupon there was a general raid upon the camp and its stores, which were so abundant that Elisha's prophecy was fulfilled ere the day ended. *Hammond.*

3. *Now there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate.* By the Mosaic law, lepers were regarded as ceremonially unclean, and excluded from all association with others, and, in the language of the statute, were required "to dwell alone without the camp" (Lev. 13 : 46 ; Num. 5 : 2, 3). The form of expression makes it plain that this law was enacted in the wilderness while Israel occupied a camp, and before they reached settled habitations in Canaan. It thus affords ocular demonstration of the falsity of that critical hypothesis which would assign the law to a much later date. Moreover, the fact that these lepers were outside of the city shows that this law was in existence, and that it was observed even in the apostate kingdom of the ten tribes. W. H. G.

6. **The Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise.** Keil truly remarks that we cannot say whether the miracle by which God now wrought deliverance for Samaria consisted in a mere illusion of the sense of hearing—parallel to the illusion of the sense of sight by which Elisha had been recently delivered (chap. 6 : 19, 20) ; or whether there was any objective reality in the sound. He adds with equal truth that the determination of this question is a matter of no importance. "The Divine causality is the same in either case."

**The kings of the Hittites.** The Hittites, who are found in early times far to the south in the country about Hebron (Gen. 23 : 7), and who afterward inhabited the central table-land of Judea (Josh. 11 : 3), seem to have retired northward after the occupation of Palestine by the Israelites. They are found among the Syrian enemies of the Egyptians in the monuments of the nineteenth dynasty (about B.C. 1300), and appear at that time to have inhabited the valley of the Upper Orontes. In the early Assyrian monuments they appear as the most powerful people of northern Syria, dwelling on both banks of the Euphrates in the country along its course from Bir to Balis. In this tract they form a great confederacy under a number of petty kings, while at the same time there is a second confederacy of their race farther to the south, which seems to inhabit the anti-Lebanon be-

tween Hamath and Damascus. These southern Hittites are under the dominion of *twelve kings*. They are in the time of Benhadad and Hazael a powerful people, especially strong in *chariots* ; and generally assist the Syrians against the Assyrians ("Ancient Monarchies," vol. ii., pp. 361-63). The Syrians seem now to have imagined that these southern Hittites had been hired by Jehoram. B. C.

Monumental research has not only proved the truth of the events recorded in Scripture, it also proves that the account of these events must have been written by contemporaries. On no other hypothesis is the minute accuracy which distinguishes it to be explained. This accuracy has lately been illustrated by a startling and unexpected discovery. Besides the small Hittite tribe settled in the south of Judah, of whom we hear so much in connection with the lives of the patriarchs, reference is more than once made in the Books of Kings to Hittites living in the north of Syria. Solomon, we are told, imported horses from Egypt, which were sold again to "all the kings of the Hittites" and the kings of Aram or Syria (1 K. 10 : 29). Again, when God had sent a panic upon the Syrian army which was besieging Samaria, the soldiers of Benhadad supposed that "the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians." Objectors to the historical truth of the Old Testament narrative declared that these allusions to northern Hittites destroyed its credibility. No Hittites in the north of Syria were known to classical writers ; and the Hittites of Genesis lived in the southern part of Judea. But first the Egyptian and then the Assyrian monuments proved that not only did Hittite tribes inhabit the very district to which the notices in the Books of Kings would assign them, but also that they were once a very powerful and important people. In the time of the great Egyptian monarch, Rameses II., the oppressor of the children of Israel, they contended on equal terms with the Egyptians themselves ; the Egyptian king was glad finally to secure a peace by marrying a Hittite princess. For several centuries they successfully withstood the power of Assyria ; and it was not until the reign of Sargon that their capital, Carchemish, was at last taken by storm, and the last Hittite sovereign replaced by an Assyrian governor. In the age of the Exodus they had carried their arms across Asia Minor as far as the shores of the Ægean, and the empire they founded in Asia Minor has left remains in the neighborhood of the river Halys,

as well as on the sculptured rocks of Lydia. They had invented a peculiar system of pictorial writing, and their art, though based on Babylonian models, was also of a peculiar kind. The early art of Greece was indebted to it, and through the art of Greece the art of modern Europe as well. The site of their northern capital, Carchemish, was discovered at a place now called Jerablús, on the Euphrates, by Mr. George Smith. Since then the ruins of Carchemish have been partially explored, and some of the Hittite monuments disinterred among them are now in the British Museum. Carchemish, however, was not the only capital the Hittites possessed. The Bible speaks of their "kings" in the plural, and in agreement with this we find from the Egyptian inscriptions that they had also a southern capital on the Orontes, called Kadesh. *Sayce.*

7. The Egyptians advancing from the south, and the Hittites from the north, the Syrians apprehended that they might be surrounded and all chance of retreat cut off. They accordingly fled with precipitation by the only route which they supposed was left open to them, eastward to the Jordan (verse 15), that they might make their way as speedily and directly as possible to Damascus, whence they had come. **Fled in the twilight.** Everything was accurately adjusted, in the plan of God, to effect His purpose, and bring to pass what He had declared through Elisha. W. H. G.

Not long before, Elisha's servant saw chariots and horses, but heard none; now, these Syrians hear chariots and horses, but see none: that sight comforted his heart; this sound dismayed theirs. The Israelites heard no noise within the walls; the lepers heard no noise without the gates; only the Syrians heard this noise in their camp. What a scorn doth God put upon these presumptuous Aramites! He will not vouchsafe to use any substantial stratagem against them. Nothing but an empty sound shall scatter them, and send them home empty of substance, laden with shame, half dead with fear. The very horses that might have hastened their flight are left tied in their tents. Their very garments are a burden. All is left behind save their very bodies, and those breathless for speed. *Bp. H.*

12. *The king's fear of stratagem and ambuscade in the seeming retreat.* Not surprising when we remember how large his experience had been of this Syrian style of warfare. Jehoram had the report of the lepers only. He had not heard the noise of an oncoming host which filled the ears of the besiegers. And

he had no reason to look for God's favor, though it had been promised him. The very consciousness of his evil-doing and disbelief only made his belief and expectation of good the more difficult. Doubt of God's mercy and distrust of His promises root themselves naturally in a guilty heart and a disquieted, suspicious conscience.

13-15. *A sensible suggestion of one of his officers acted upon.* "Send men upon the few remaining horses, and trace the course of the Syrian host. All the men and the horses are dying fast. We may well risk these to ascertain the truth of the matter." So two chariots were sent forth to search out the track of the besieging army. They went on until they came in view of the Jordan, "and, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels which the Syrians had cast away in their haste." The effects were evident, though none knew the cause of so complete a panic. As rapidly drove the now rejoicing messengers back over the twenty and more miles they had traversed, and told the king. And with the morning light the imprisoned, famished people of Samaria went forth to liberty and abundance. B.

15. **They went after them unto Jordan.** The Syrians had fled probably by the great road which led from Samaria to Damascus through Geba, En-gannim, Bethshean, and Aphek. This is the route assigned to Holofernes in Judith. It crosses the Jordan at the *Jisr Mejamia*, about thirty-five miles northeast of Samaria. B. C.

16-19. *Elisha's word of promise and his prophecy of judgment fulfilled in order.* The tents of the Syrians were spoiled. And so enormous was the amount of grain in store, that in its sale that day in the city gate the low scale of prices predicted by Elisha was accurately realized. Thus was his word of promise made good. And thus was God glorified in His merciful interposition *again* in behalf of His chastened people. But Elisha had been moved of God to utter a prediction of judgment against one who dared deride his promise of Divine deliverance. A high official of the court in personal attendance upon the king the day before had openly expressed his disbelief in Elisha's prediction of speedy and complete relief. "As soon expect a rain of flour and barley from heaven," he had mockingly said to the prophet. "Thou shalt see it," rejoined Elisha, "but thou shalt not eat thereof." Now, when the people were bringing the grain from the Syrian camp into the city, this same lord was appointed by the king to collect a toll

upon the food. It would seem that the people were indignant at the imposition of such a tax at such a time, when many within the city were still starving. This led to violence against the king's collector. "And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died." This statement occurs twice, and the whole previous incident is cited to emphasize the fact of God's judgment upon his disbelief, as solemnly foretold by Elisha. The people were God's agents of judgment in crushing the proud man who had scorned His power. B.

The writer's intention is to lay special stress on the fulfilment of Elisha's prophecy; and to emphasize the punishment that follows on a lack of faith. The concluding passage of the chapter is, as Bähr says, "a finger of warning to unbelievers." *Hammond*.

**20. The people trod upon him in the gate, and he died.** Twice is his death recorded; twice does the Holy Spirit bid us mark it. And we learn this from it, that the punishment of unbelief is sure, is great, is beyond expectation dreadful. Faith "gives glory to God." Unbelief robs Him of His glory. It "makes Him a liar." It slights His goodness, it asperses His wisdom, it impeaches His sovereignty, it denies His power. There is not one of His perfections at which it does not strike. And then it is the parent of every other sin. It keeps alive all our corruptions; it strengthens and covers them. We are taught also here *the misery of unbelievers*. They are living now in a world of mercy. They hear too of greater mercies than any which the world affords; of mercies, such as angels in their innocence never received or perhaps thought of. But what is written on them all? "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." *C. Bradley*.

Unbelief which rejects God's plain promises because it does not see how they can be fulfilled is common enough still, and is as unreasonable as it is impertinent. Elisha was as ignorant as this nobleman of the means, but his faith fixed its eyes on the faithful word, and trusted, while sense, self-conceit, and worldliness, a mole pretending to have an eagle's eye, declared that to be impossible which it could not see the way to bring about, and thereby exposed only its own blind arrogance. A. M.

Unbelief is the same to-day as in Jehoram's time. God may give us deliverance ten times, and yet when, for the eleventh time, danger arises, unbelief denies that God can or will help. Unbelief is a desperate scholar, and the

reason for this is that it does not want to learn. No man so blind as he who will not see; and unbelief will not see because it shuts its eyes tight against all evidence. All Elisha's previous miracles were now of no avail. *Schauffler*.

Is not the sentence on this scoffing lord the very sentence pronounced ever on unbelief? In his case, it was fulfilled by the crowd that pressed, in their ravenous hunger, through the gate, and trod him down; but in ordinary cases, in our days, the natural operation of unbelief is to shut men out from the fruition of which faith is the necessary and only condition. It is no avenging and arbitrarily imposed exclusion, but the necessary result of self-made disqualification, which brings on the unbeliever the doom, "Thou shalt not eat thereof." To have eyes opened at last to our own folly, and to see the rich provision of God's table when it is too late, will be a chief pang of future retribution, as it sometimes is of present godlessness. A. M.

This tragic conclusion of the story seems designed to impress these definite truths: that God notes all distrust of His promise and power; that He resents and punishes positive scornful disbelief of His positive promises; that His truthfulness ensures the execution of His threatenings equally with His promises; and that he that hardeneth himself against God "shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy!"

The incident of the lepers (verses 3-10) is full of valuable suggestion. They also are agents of God's providence. Their part in the working out of this result shows how God puts in and finishes every minute detail essential to the completion of His design. The Syrian camp needed to be occupied by nightfall, or the store of provision might have been rifled by famishing beasts. And the starving people of Samaria had imminent need of the food. So the lepers are moved to go out to the deserted camp at twilight, yet they reason and determine and act really of their own impulse, and *seemingly* of that alone. But the Divine is here, as everywhere, blended with the human agency in the production of the event. They go, they behold, they satisfy their hunger and their greed for spoil; and then their consciences are stirred, and they return and tell the story. So God secures the getting and the giving of the necessary information.

We add, in conclusion, that the same essential truths are taught in all these Old Testament lessons. The incidents vary, but in each we see God acting in behalf of or upon His



people, and dealing with His enemies. Outwardly and indirectly through providences (*here interpreted to us*), and directly through His prophet by His Spirit. Now against and now with His people, sometimes even with His enemies. But with both often tarrying in His long-suffering mercy, waiting to be gracious.

In the end always bringing deliverance to His own who trust Him, and executing judgment against those who wilfully disbelieve and reject His grace. Are not these the chief facts here taught in the story of individuals and the history of peoples? And are they not the supreme facts of all time and of every personal history? B.

## Section 22.

### THE SHUNAMMITE'S LAND RESTORED. ELISHA AND HAZAEL.

2 KINGS 8 : 1-15.

1 Now Elisha had spoken unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn : for the LORD  
2 hath called for a famine ; and it shall also come upon the land seven years. And the woman arose, and did according to the word of the man of God : and she went with her  
3 household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines : and she  
4 went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land. Now the king was talking with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things  
5 that Elisha hath done. And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored to life him that was dead, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the  
6 woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life. And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.  
7 And Elisha came to Damascus ; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick ; and it was  
8 told him, saying, The man of God is come hither. And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying,  
9 Shall I recover of this sickness ? So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover  
10 of this sickness ? And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou shalt surely recover ;  
11 howbeit the LORD hath shewed me that he shall surely die. And he settled his countenance  
12 steadfastly upon him, until he was ashamed : and the man of God wept. And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord ? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel : their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash in pieces their little ones, and rip up their women with  
13 child. And Hazael said, But what is thy servant, which is but a dog, that he should do this great thing ? And Elisha answered, The LORD hath shewed me that thou shalt be king  
14 over Syria. Then he departed from Elisha, and came to his master ; who said to him, What  
15 said Elisha to thee ? And he answered, He told me that thou shouldst surely recover. And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took the coverlet, and dipped it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died : and Hazael reigned in his stead.

1-15. ELISHA is still the *protagonistes* of the historical drama. The writer brings together in the present section two more occasions of a public character in which he was concerned,

and in which kings also bore a part. One of the occasions is domestic, and shows the interest which Jehoram took in the miracles of the prophet, and in those who were the objects

of them (verses 1-6). The other belongs to Syrian rather than to Israelite history, and proves that the influence of Elisha was not confined to Palestine (verses 7-15). *Hammond.*

THE SEQUEL OF THE SHUNAMMITE MOTHER'S STORY.

2 Kings 8 : 1-6.

In chronological order this narrative seems to precede the cure of Naaman, while Gehazi was still the servant of the prophet. A famine of long duration was about to descend on the land, and Elisha gave timely warning to the Shunammite to take refuge somewhere else. J. O.

Seven years had this Shunammite sojourned in Philistia; now she returns to her own, and is excluded. She that found harbor among Philistines finds oppression and violence among Israelites; those of her kindred, taking advantage of her absence, had shared her possessions. How oft doth it fall out that the worst enemies of a man are those of his own house! All went by contraries with this Shunammite. In the famine she had enough; in the common plenty she was scanted: Philistines were kind unto her; Israelites, cruel. How happily doth God contrive all events for the good of His! This suppliant shall fall upon that instant for her suit when the king shall be talking with Gehazi; when Gehazi shall be talking of her to the king. The words of Gehazi, the thoughts of the king, the desires of the Shunammite shall be all drawn together by the wise providence of God into the centre of one moment, that his oppressed servant might receive a speedy justice. *Bp. H.*

**1. Now Elisha had spoken unto the woman.** The reference is to a time long anterior to the siege of Samaria. A famine is mentioned in chap. 4 : 38, which must belong to the reign of Jehoram, and which is probably identified with that here spoken of. Elisha, on its approach, recommended the Shunammite, though she was a woman of substance (chap. 4 : 8), to quit her home and remove to some other residence, where she might escape the pressure of the calamity. He left it to her to choose the place of her temporary abode. The phrase, "God hath called for a famine," means no more and no less than "God has determined that there shall be a famine." With God to speak the word is to bring about the event.

**4. Now the king was talking with Gehazi.** The king, that is, happened to be

talking with Gehazi at the moment when the woman came into his presence and "cried" to him. It has been reasonably concluded from this that chronological order is not observed in the portion of the narrative which treats of Elisha and his doings, since a king of Israel would scarcely be in familiar conversation with a leper (*Keil*). It may be added that Gehazi can scarcely have continued to be the servant of Elisha, as he evidently now was, after his leprosy. He must have dwelt "without the gate."

**5. And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he—i.e., Elisha—had restored a dead body to life.** This was undoubtedly the greatest of all Elisha's miracles, and Gehazi naturally enlarged upon it. As an eye-witness he could give all the details. **That, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land.** The coincidence can scarcely have been accidental. Divine Providence so ordered matters that, just when the king's interest in the woman was most warm, she should appear before him to urge her claim. At another time, Jehoram would, it is probable, have been but slightly moved by her complaint. Under the peculiar circumstances, he was deeply moved, and at once granted the woman the redress for which she asked. **And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.** The Shunammite was accompanied by her son, now a boy of at least ten or eleven years old—the actual object of Elisha's miracle. The king's interest in the woman would be still more roused by this circumstance.

**6.** The order was, that not only was the Shunammite to receive back her house and estate, but that she was also to have the full value of all that the land had produced beyond the expense of cultivation during the seven years of her absence. English law lays down the same rule in cases of unlawful possession for which there is no valid excuse.

The piety of the Shunammite had been sufficiently shown in the previous record left us of her (chap. 4 : 8-37). The sequel of her story indicates how, in a wonderful way, events and circumstances seemingly fortuitous and unconnected work together for the advantage and happiness of one who lives virtuously, and seeks in all things to serve God and advance the cause of religion. "The series of incidents," it has been well said, "forms a marvel-

lous web of Divine dispensations" (*Bähr*). 1. *The coincidence of the king's desire to learn more about Elisha with the return of the woman to her own land:* It was, humanly speaking, a pure accident that the curiosity of the king with respect to Elisha happened to be aroused just as the famine was over, and the woman, having returned from Philistia into the land of Israel, found her estate occupied by another. It was another accident that she bethought herself of appealing to the king, instead of having recourse to any other remedy. 2. *The coincidence of Gehazi being speaking of her case exactly as she made her appearance.* Gehazi had many miracles to relate, and might have been discoursing of any one of them; but events were so ordered that it was of her child's resurrection that he was telling the king, and not of any other miracle, when she came into the royal presence. This coincidence it was which so interested the king in her, that he at once gave the order for restoring her estate to her. We may learn from the entire narrative that our lives are divinely ordered; that nothing happens to us by mere chance; that events which seem to us, at the time when they happen, of the least possible importance, may be necessary links in the chain which Divine providence is forging for the ordering of our lives, and for the working out through them of the Divine purpose. *Hammond.*

INTERVIEW BETWEEN ELISHA AND HAZAEL.  
KILLING OF BENHADAD BY HAZAEL.

*Verses 7-15.*

**7, 8.** The Lord has won to Himself honor among the heathen. In Israel we have seen kings sending to consult heathen gods; among the heathen we behold a king sending to consult the God of Israel through His prophet. The great Benhadad lies on a sick bed; and having heard that the famous prophet of Israel, who had healed his general Naaman, was come to Damascus, he sent a great officer named Hazael to Elisha to ask if he should recover from this sickness. *Kitto.*—The miracles of Elisha had had, at any rate, this effect—they had convinced the Syrians that Jehovah was a great and powerful God, and made them regard Elisha himself as a true prophet. Their faith in their own superstitions must have been at least partially shaken by these convictions. It was by these and similar weakenings of established errors that the world was gradually educated, and the way prepared for the introduction of Christianity. There was very early

among the Syrians a flourishing Christian Church. *Hammond.*

**10-15.** The disease which laid him upon his bed was not mortal; he might certainly recover from it, and would recover if let alone. This was all that was required from him, and he gave it. But he knew more, about which he was not consulted. He read the heart, the purposes, and the future life of the man who stood before him, and was willing to let him know it. So, after a pause, he added, as addressed to Hazael himself and not as part of his response to the king, "Howbeit, the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die." Much misapprehension has arisen from regarding this as part of the response to be borne to the sick king, though the change of personal pronouns in the two sentences might alone suffice to show the difference: "thou" in the first; "he" in the second. Having said this, the prophet looked steadfastly at Hazael, until the latter quailed beneath that searching gaze; and then the man of God turned his head aside and wept. Why wept he? Hazael himself respectfully asked that question. Elisha answered that he wept because he clearly saw the misery and desolation which this man would hereafter inflict upon Israel. On hearing this, the Syrian exclaimed, "But what is thy servant, a mere dog, that he should do this great deed?" He was not offended, as the current version would seem to imply, or he would not have called it a great deed. But he asked how could a person of comparatively low condition like himself have such high influence upon the fate of nations. The prophet answered that the Lord had disclosed to him that he should become king over Syria. Hazael then returned to his master, and in reply to his anxious inquiries delivered the message the prophet intended for him, but suppressed the intimation given to himself that he should really die. But the very next day, it would seem that Hazael accomplished the purpose he had probably long contemplated, and which the prophet had detected. He put his master to death, and in such a manner that the crime remained undiscovered, and the king was supposed to have died of his disease; and dying apparently childless, the wicked and unscrupulous general was enabled to secure the object of his ambition. *Kitto.*

**11. And he settled his countenance steadfastly**—literally, and he settled his countenance and set it—*i.e.*, Elisha fixed on Hazael a long and meaning look—**until he was ashamed**—*i.e.*, until Hazael felt em-

barrassed, and his eyes fell. It may be gathered that the ambitious courtier had already formed a murderous design against his master, and understood by the peculiar gaze which the prophet fixed upon him that his design was penetrated. **And the man of God wept.** There flashed on the prophet's mind all the long series of calamities which Israel would suffer at the hands of Syria during Hazael's reign, and he could not but weep at the thought of them. *Hammond.*

**13.** He does not shrink from Elisha's words, or mean to say that he would be a dog, could he act so cruelly as Elisha predicts he will. On the contrary, Elisha's prediction has raised his hopes, and his only doubt is whether so much good fortune ("this great thing") can be in store for one so mean. "Dog" here, as generally (though not always) in Scripture, has the sense of "mean," "low," "contemptible." B. C.—Hazael does not accuse Elisha of making him out a dog in the future, but calls himself a dog in the present. Hazael means to say: How is it possible that he, occupying, as he does, so poor and humble a position as that of a mere courtier, should ever wage war with Israel, and do the "great things" which Elisha has predicted of him? **And Elisha answered, The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria.** Elisha explains how it would be possible. Hazael would not continue in his poor and humble condition. Jehovah has revealed it to him that the mere courtier will shortly mount the Syrian throne.

**14. He told me that thou shouldest surely recover.** This was giving half Elisha's answer, and suppressing the other half. The *suppressio veri* is a *suggestio falsi*; and the suppression was Hazael's act, not Elisha's. Had Hazael repeated the whole of Elisha's answer, "Say unto him, Thou shalt surely recover; howbeit the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die," Benhadad might have been puzzled, but he would not have been deceived. *Hammond.*—Hazael repeated the *exact* words of Elisha: "Thou shalt certainly live;" but he omitted the clause by which Elisha had shown how those words were to be understood. He thus deceived his master, while he could flatter himself that he had not uttered a lie. B. C.

**15. A thick cloth.** The fatal prediction is accomplished in every point. Hazael smothered his master with a wet cloth, seizes the throne, and his first measure is a bloody battle at Ramoth against the combined forces of both

the Jewish kingdoms under Jehoram, king of Israel, and Abaziah, who had just succeeded his father, Jehoram of Judah. In this calamitous field Jehoram was wounded, and retreated to Jezreel, where Abaziah came to meet him.

*Milman.*

Hazael succeeded in repulsing the Assyrians, and maintaining his independence, notwithstanding all their efforts to conquer him. He reduced Israel to a species of semi-subjection (chap. 18:7). He compelled even Judea to purchase peace at his hands (chap. 12:18). He was, on the whole, the most warlike of all the early kings of Syria; and, though he suffered one great defeat at the hands of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser II., yet he issued from the struggle unsubdued, and left his dominions intact to his son and successor, Benhadad III. *Hammond.*

#### PERSONAL SUGGESTIONS.

Even in the practice of the purest and loftiest souls there are oftentimes slight variances from truth or rectitude, waverings of a kind, generous, unselfish spirit, neglects of that love which is heart-expanding and enriching, and even unchecked pulsations of temper, pride, and evil passions, and the soul's own knowledge of these concealed weaknesses, so inconsistent with its *apparent* life, will cause the face to flush at the thought of unveiling its secret feelings to another soul. B.—Is there one who can affirm that he could stand with unbleached cheek before the man whom he believed to be viewing his naked soul? Is there one who could endure, without confusion of face, without a quivering frame, the keen anatomy of his character, his conduct, his spirit, by even the most friendly hand in the world? Would he be content that any human eye should trace the tortuous meanderings of feeling in regard to any one matter in which he has ever been engaged—the unholy thought, the ungenerous imputation, the low suspicion, the doubt, the dislike, the covetousness, the hate, the contention, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life—that more or less enter into and defile, with the prints of villainous hoofs, the fairest gardens of life?

To us it is of infinitely less concernment what man thinks of us than what God thinks; what man knows than what God knows; yet while we shrink with such instinctive dread from the too near survey of a fellow-sinner, we manage to get on quietly, with small trouble of mind, in the perfect knowledge that One who cannot be mistaken, who sees through all disguises,

and from whom nothing can be for a moment hid, and who understands us far better than we ourselves know or than our nearest friends or keenest enemies imagine, has a sleepless eye fixed with unceasing vigilance upon our hearts. This keen susceptibility to the inspection and good opinion of man, and this comparative indifference to the constant survey of God, is a familiar thing, and strikes us little because it is familiar; but it is nevertheless one of the strangest anomalies of our nature, and is beheld with astonishment and grief by the angels of God. In their view it is an inversion of the whole order of life and being. To them God is all, His inspection is all.

How different would be our conversation and our walk if we lived and moved in the ever-present consciousness that the unseen Eye was upon us and noted all our steps, and that the opinion of us, hereafter to be pronounced in the presence of the assembled universe, as the foundation of final and unchangeable judgment, fixing our lot forever, shutting us up in despair or opening all the golden doors of joy, is a matter of inconceivably more importance to us than all that the world can think or say, can offer to us or deprive us of! Let us believe that to walk and act from day to day with this as a vital consciousness about us, as a check to sin, an encouragement to faith, and a stimulus to duty, without any supreme anxiety but to walk so as to please God, is a most pleasant life, is the very antepast of heaven. There is no bondage in it. It is perfect freedom, and is happiness as complete as this world allows. It relieves us from many masters, and redeems from bondage to a thousand fears. Oh, the blessedness of being freed from this slavish reference to erring man's judgment of our conduct and our motives, by being enabled to realize the presence and to welcome the inspection of One who, although He be of purer eyes than to endure iniquity, is incapable of harsh, unjust, or unkind judgment—who has become to us in Christ Jesus a kind and loving Father, and longs with deep yearnings of

paternal affection to pour out upon us all the fulness of His everlasting love! It is quite impossible for any one to be truly happy until this great work, the reversal of the ordinary influences upon his life, has been wrought within him, making God first and man second in all his thoughts; until the great matter becomes God's judgment of us, and the small matter man's; until, in answer to all injurious thoughts and imputations, we can answer with Paul, "It is a small matter for me to be judged of you or of man's judgment; for I serve the Lord Christ." *Kitto*.

This man, Hazael, who was ashamed at the idea of perpetrating such enormities at first, actually enacted them a few hours afterward. The elements of the devil are in every man, though he may not know it. Men have often deprecated courses of action which afterward they have pursued with alacrity and delight. The virtue of many men is only vice sleeping. The evil elements of the heart are like gunpowder, passive, until the spark of temptation falls on them. The greatest monsters in human history were at one time considered innocent and kind. "Many a man," says a modern author, "could he have a glimpse in innocent youth of what he would be twenty or thirty years after, would pray in anguish that he might be taken in youth before coming to that." What is the moral of this? The necessity of a change of heart. *A. Mackay*.

When temptation is at a distance, and all goes on smoothly, we are apt to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think; but let a strong temptation work upon a suitable corruption in the heart (Satan and opportunity blowing up the flame), and there is no saying what may happen. It was well observed that "heed ought to be taken by the best of saints against the worst of sins." "Watch and pray, therefore, that ye enter not into temptation." And "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." But if thou hast fallen, let not thy sin drive thee to despair, but to Christ, that thou mayest be delivered both from its guilt and its power. *Hill*.

## Section 23.

REIGN OF JEHU, 28 YEARS (*Begun*).**1st of Athaliah to 22d of Joash, in Judah.**

ANOINTED ; SLAYS JEHOAM OF ISRAEL, AHAZIAH OF JUDAH, AND JEZEBEL.

2 KINGS 9 : 1-37.

1 AND Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up  
 2 thy loins, and take this vial of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. And when thou  
 3 comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and  
 4 make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber. Then take  
 5 the vial of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee  
 6 king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not. So the young man, even the  
 7 young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. And when he came, behold, the captains  
 8 of the host were sitting ; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said,  
 9 Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain. And he arose, and went into the  
 10 house ; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, the God  
 11 of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel. And thou  
 12 shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the  
 13 prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. For the  
 14 whole house of Ahab shall perish : and I will cut off from Ahab every man child, and him  
 15 that is shut up and him that is left at large in Israel. And I will make the house of Ahab  
 16 like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah.  
 17 And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her.  
 18 And he opened the door, and fled. Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord : and one  
 19 said unto him, Is all well? wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them,  
 20 Ye know the man and what his talk was. And they said, It is false ; tell us now. And he  
 21 said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king  
 22 over Israel. Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on  
 23 the top of the stairs, and blew the trumpet, saying, Jehu is king. So Jehu the son of Jehosha-  
 24 phat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. (Now Joram kept Ramoth-gilead, he and  
 25 all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria ; but king Joram was returned to be healed in Jez-  
 26 reel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of  
 27 Syria.) And Jehu said, If this be your mind, then let none escape and go forth out of the  
 28 city, to go to tell it in Jezreel. So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel ; for Joram  
 29 lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram. Now the watchman  
 30 stood on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a  
 31 company. And Joram said, Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, Is it  
 32 peace? So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it  
 33 peace? And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the  
 34 watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again. Then he  
 35 sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, Is it  
 36 peace? And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And  
 37 the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again : and the driving  
 38 is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi ; for he driveth furiously. And Joram said,  
 39 Make ready. And they made ready his chariot. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king  
 40 of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu, and found him in the  
 41 portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said,  
 42 Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother  
 43 Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many? And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said  
 44 to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah. And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength,  
 45 and smote Joram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in

25 his chariot. Then said *Jehu* to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite : for remember how that, when I and thou rode together  
 26 after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him : Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD ; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of *ground*, according to  
 27 the word of the LORD. But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot : and they smote him at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and  
 28 died there. And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David.

29 And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah.

30 And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it ; and she painted her eyes, and  
 31 tired her head, and looked out at the window. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said,  
 32 Is it peace, thou Zimri, thy master's murderer? And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down : and some of her blood was  
 34 sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses : and he trode her under foot. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink ; and he said, See now to this cursed woman, and bury her :  
 35 for she is a king's daughter. And they went to bury her : but they found no more of her  
 36 than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the  
 37 Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall the dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel : and the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel ; so that they shall not say, This is Jezebel.

ANOTHER great revolution was at hand. Four kings of the house of Omri and Ahab had now sat on the throne of Israel ; but the death-knell of the wicked dynasty had rung. There had been a new war between Syria and Israel ; and Ramoth-Gilead, as before, was the scene of the contest. King Jehoram had been wounded in battle, and had retired to Jezreel, where his cousin, King Ahaziah of Judah, had come to see him. W. G. B.

Elisha is still the primary figure in the historical drama ; but at this point his personality merges in the general account of the kingdom of Israel, which it is the object of the writer to trace from beginning to end. Elisha here performs his last public act, being commissioned, and carrying out his commission, to transfer the kingdom of Israel from the unworthy dynasty of Omri, which on account of its persistent idolatry has fallen under Divine condemnation, to a new dynasty, that of Jehu, which will, at any rate, check the worst excesses of the prevalent idolatrous system, and maintain the Jehovah-worship as the religion of the State.

*Hammond.*

With Jehu begins the most powerful, the most important, and the longest-lived of all the Israelite dynasties. The descendants of Jehu kept the throne " to the fourth generation " (2 K. 10 : 30). Five kings in succession, furnished from a single house, showed that, under certain circumstances, God would allow, even to the

northern kingdom, a certain prosperity and stability. The five reigns filled the space of above a century, and in the course of this period Israel attained the highest point of her greatness. Under Jeroboam the Second there was a near approach to a restoration of the Davidic kingdom, not, however, in the Davidic line, but in a line which aspired to supersede it.

1-3. The further course of the Syrian war is not given in Scripture with any detail ; but it appears that Jehoram, shortly after the panic flight of the enemy from Samaria (last Section), took the offensive, and in conjunction with his nephew and ally, Ahaziah king of Judah, invaded the Syrian possessions in northern Peræa and recovered the important city of Ramoth-Gilead, which Ahab and Jehoshaphat had failed to take (1 K. 22 : 29-36 ; 2 K. 8 : 28 ; 9 : 1, 14). Jehoram received severe wounds in the course of the siege, and in consequence withdrew to Jezreel for medical aid, leaving his army in Ramoth-Gilead under the command of Jehu, one of the captains of the host, to watch over the place (verse 14) and defend it, should the Syrians attempt its recapture. It was while matters were in this position that Elisha, regarding the fitting time as at last arrived, proceeded to carry out the commission which had been entrusted to Elijah many years previously (1 K. 19 : 16), of anointing a new king to the throne of Israel in the place of Jehoram, whose sins had forfeited his crown. One of the " sons

of the prophets" was sent by him to the Israelite army at Ramoth-Gilead, with instructions to seek out Jehu, the son of Nimshi, and having obtained a private audience, to anoint him king of Israel with the holy oil of the sanctuary, a portion of which the prophet put into his hands. G. R.

It is a serious question how the relation of Elisha toward a dynasty stained by so many crimes, and so unfaithful to the true service of the Lord, is to be explained. It certainly cannot be understood without taking several considerations into account. The situation was not simple, but complicated, and accordingly the motives influencing the conduct of the prophets were varied, and, if one-sidedly viewed, may for that very reason appear conflicting. These three considerations may, however, help us to understand their general bearing. First, the prophets were always only the executors of God's behests; they stood not in any independent personal relation to events or individuals. Secondly, the behests of God, and consequently the prophetic commission, whether as regarded judgment or deliverance, applied to acts and individual events, not to persons or lives. Thirdly, the final object of all was, on the one hand, the vindication of Jehovah's dealings, and, on the other, the arresting of Israel's spiritual and with it of their national decline. It was needful that signal judgments should sweep away Ahab and all connected with his ways, and Jehu was, in the circumstances of the time and in the state of the people, the most suitable instrument for it. Thus far, and thus far only, had his counter-revolution the countenance of the prophets. A. E.

We must distinguish throughout this history between the motives which actuated Jehu in his conspiracy against Ahab, and the providential purpose which, as God's instrument, he was raised up to fulfil. That is to be read from the standpoint of the prophet. Israel was a people called into existence for the purpose of being a witness for the true God amid surrounding heathenism. It owed its existence and possession of the land of Caanan to Jehovah. From Him it had received its polity; to Him it was bound in solemn covenant; the fundamental laws of its constitution required undivided allegiance to Him. The penalties which would follow from disobedience were but a counterpart of the blessings which would flow from obedience. The first great sin of the nation was in the setting up of the calves under Jeroboam. For adherence to this unlawful form of worship two dynasties had already perished

(verse 9). But with the accession of the house of Omri a new development in evil took place. The worship of the Phœnician Baal was introduced; God's prophets were relentlessly persecuted, and, under the influence of Jezebel, the moving spirit of three reigns, corruption had spread far and near throughout the realm, and had penetrated even to Judah. Jehoram at first showed a better spirit (chap. 8 : 2), but he must afterward have yielded to the superior influence of his mother, for Baal-worship was restored, and had the prestige of court example (verse 22; chap. 10 : 21). Under these circumstances, it was folly to hesitate, if Israel was to be saved. "Here the question of the justifiableness of rebellion against a legitimate dynasty, or of revolution in the ordinary sense of the word, cannot arise. The course of the house of Ahab was a rebellion against all law, human and Divine, in Israel" (*Bähr*). Even in ordinary earthly states, the right of revolution when religion, liberty, morality, and national honor can be saved by no other means, is universally conceded. But revolution here was not left to dubious human wisdom. The initiative was taken by Jehovah himself, acting through His prophet, and express Divine sanction was given to the overthrow of Ahab's house. J. O.

Oh, the sure though patient justice of the Almighty! Not only Ahab and Jezebel had been bloody and idolatrous, but Israel was drawn into the partnership of their crimes. All these shall share in the judgment. Elijah's complaint in the cave now receives this late answer: Hazael shall plague Israel; Jehu shall plague the house of Ahab and Jezebel. *Bp. H.*

**6. Thus saith Jehovah, God of Israel.** Jehovah's name is emphatically put forward, in contrast with the name of Baal, as that of the true God of Israel; and appeal is made to Jehu, as to one whose God is Jehovah, and who will accept as authoritative a message emanating from Him. *I have anointed thee king over the people of Jehovah, over Israel.* Practically, the people is, in the main, "the people of Baal" (chap. 10 : 19-21), but theoretically and by covenant it is "the people of Jehovah"—His "peculiar people" (De. 14 : 2), chosen by Him out of all the nations of the earth to be His own.

**7. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master.** This is plainly a command, not a prophecy. Jehu is expressly ordered by God to "smite"—*i.e.*, destroy utterly—the whole house of Ahab. This command he carried out (verses 24, 33; chap. 10 : 1-11); and his obedience to it obtained for him the temporal reward that his children to the fourth



generation should sit on the throne of Israel (chap. 10 : 80). Yet still his conduct in destroying the house of Ahab is spoken of by the prophet Hosea as a sin, and God declares, by Hosea's mouth, that he will "avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (Hos. 1 : 4). It is naturally asked, "How could Jehu's shedding this blood, at God's command and in fulfilment of His will, be a sin?" And it is rightly answered, "Because, if we do what is the will of God for any end of our own, for anything except God, we do in fact our own will, not God's. It was not lawful for Jehu to depose and slay the king his master, except at the express command of God, who, as the supreme King, sets up and puts down earthly rulers as He wills. For any other end, and done otherwise than at God's express command, such an act is sin. Jehu was rewarded for the measure in which he fulfilled God's commands, as Ahab, 'who had sold himself to work wickedness,' had yet a temporal reward for humbling himself publicly, when rebuked by God for his sin, and so honoring God, amid an apostate people. But Jehu, by cleaving, against the will of God, to Jeroboam's sin (chap. 11 : 29, 31), which served his own political ends, showed that, in the slaughter of his master, he acted, not as he pretended, out of zeal for the will of God (chap. 10 : 16), but served his own will and his own ambition only. By his disobedience to the one command of God, he showed that he would have equally disobeyed the other, had it been contrary to his own will or interest. He *had no principle of obedience*. And so the blood which was shed according to the righteous judgment of God, became sin to him that shed it in order to fulfil, not the will of God, but his own" (*Pusey*). *Hammond*.

7. *The blood of all the servants of the Lord*. We may gather from this passage that besides the murder of the prophets there had been general persecutions of the worshippers of Jehovah at Jezebel's instigation—persecutions which are not recorded in the direct narrative. The allusion cannot be to the single case of Naboth. B. C.

9. **And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat**. Jeroboam's house had been "cut off," smitten, destroyed, till not one of his posterity was left, about seventy years previously, by Baasha, "because of his sins which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the Lord God of Israel to anger." The far greater sin of Ahab could not be visited with less severity. *Hammond*.

10. **And the dogs shall eat Jezebel**. The fate of Jezebel had been prophesied by Elijah (1 K. 21 : 23 ; 2 K. 9 : 36, 37). Its announcement as imminent forms a worthy climax to this grand prophecy of Elisha's. Hers was the chief guilt. From her had come the whole of that terrible sin which had now overshadowed both kingdoms. What more fitting, then, that now, when the evil was come to a head, and Divine wrath was about to burst forth and sweep away the entire impious brood, she should be selected for a punishment of extraordinary horror—a punishment which would never be forgotten—which, in Jewish eyes, was the most terrible that could befall humanity?

In the portion of Jezreel. There most fitly would she suffer, at Jezreel, the scene of her idolatries—there, where she had set up her temple and her grove, had maintained her four hundred prophets and her priests, had threatened Elijah with destruction, and, above all, had stirred up her lord to commit murder. The "portion" or "field" of Jezreel, if not exactly identical with the vineyard of Naboth, was, at any rate, a tract closely adjoining upon it.

11. The captains do not mean to say that the man is mad ; but seeing his excited look, his strange action, and his extreme haste, they call him (as soldiers would) "this wild fellow"—"this scatter-brain."

13. **On the top of the stairs**. Rather, "on the very stairs," or "on the stairs themselves." The stairs would undoubtedly be those of the house in which the captains were assembled ; they would rise against the wall of the house from the pavement of the court to the level of the upper story, or of the roof. At the top of the stairs would be a flat platform, and this would form a convenient extempore throne, on which the new king could exhibit himself to his subjects (who were, doubtless, admitted into the court below) seated and in an elevated position.

14. **Joram had kept Ramoth-Gilead**. Rather, "Joram was keeping watch in Ramoth-Gilead." The city being taken, but the war continuing, and there being a danger of the Syrians recovering it, Joram and all Israel—*i. e.*, the whole military force—were guarding the recent conquest, while Hazael threatened it. Joram is mentioned, though not present, because the watch was kept by his orders. Then, to prevent misconception, the writer repeats, almost in the same words, what he had said in chap. 8 : 29, of Joram's personal withdrawal to Jezreel. The whole passage, "Now

. . . with Hazael, king of Syria," is parenthetical. B. C.

**15.** Literally, *let no escaper go forth from the city*—equivalent to *let no one quit the city—to go to tell it in Jezreel*. This is the important point. Secrecy was absolutely essential. If the revolt had got wind—and a single messenger might have carried the news—the whole attempt might have failed, or only have succeeded after a long and bloody civil war. *Hammond*.

**15, 16.** Jehu evinced his fitness to rule by the promptitude with which he decided on his course of action. He determined to set out at once for Jezreel, and to be the first to declare to Jehoram that his reign had ended. This relative position of the two parties in the action forms the foundation of perhaps the most striking, forcible, graphic, and yet concise description of a revolution in all literature. *Kitto*.

On a mound near the head of the valley of Jezreel is Zerin (Jezreel), commanding a view of nearly the whole of the great plain of Esdraelon westward, and eastward looking down the broad rich valley of Jezreel to the acropolis of Bethshean and the distant mountains of Gilead. The village itself is poor and miserable, and there is little to remark in the ruins that cover the mound, but beneath that heap of rubbish lie waiting for the hand of the explorer the site, perhaps the remains, of the ivory palace of Ahab, the street into which Jezebel was thrown down at the command of Jehu, and the scenes of some of the bloodiest tragedies in sacred history. Without the city, on the road to Beisan, was the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, where Joram met his death; and as we look down the long valley with its even slope of green turf, we can easily picture the advance of Jehu, which is here so graphically described; the dispatch of the several messengers, the recognition of Jehu by his furious driving, the hasty preparation of the chariots of the kings of Israel and Judah, the meeting near the foot of the mound, the death of Joram and the flight of Ahaziah, mortally wounded, over the great plain to Megiddo—all come before the traveller with a vividness and reality that can only be felt by those who have visited the spot. *Wilson*.—As we stand on the crown of the ridge, perhaps on the very site of the palace, we open our Bible and read the story of poor Naboth and his vineyard. The vineyard was here below us in the plain (verse 16). Then turn to 2 K. 9: 11–37, and the scene is changed; and every incident of that fearful change is illustrated by the natural features of the scene be-

fore us. We see how up the valley from the Jordan Jehu's troops might be seen advancing; how in Naboth's "field" the two sovereigns met the relentless soldier; how, while Joram died on the spot, Ahaziah drove across the westward plain toward the mountain-pass, by the beautiful village of Engannim ("the garden-house"), but was overtaken in the ascent, and died of his wounds at Megiddo; how, in the open place which, as usual in Eastern towns, lay before the gates of Jezreel, the body of the queen was trampled under the hoofs of Jehu's horses; how the dogs gathered round it, as even to this day, in the wretched village now seated on the ruins of the once splendid city of Jezreel, they prowl on the mounds without the walls for the offal and carrion thrown out to them to consume. *Murray's Handbook*.

**18.** The watchman evidently though his not returning suspicious, and reported it at once. Joram should now have taken alarm, but he did not. He appears to have had no notion that any danger could be approaching.

**20.** A still stranger circumstance, and one still more suspicious. The second messenger could only have been sent out because the king disapproved the detention of the first. Whoever, therefore, had detained the second messenger must be consciously acting in opposition to the wishes of the king.

**21. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot.** The uncle and the nephew went out together, still, as it would seem, unapprehensive of any danger, though the circumstances were certainly such as might well have aroused suspicion. **And met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.** Humanly speaking, this was accidental. The "portion of Naboth," or his plot of ground, lay outside the southeastern gate of the city, at no great distance from the walls; and it happened that Joram and Jehu met within its limits. Had the king started a little sooner, or had Jehu made less haste, the meeting would have taken place farther from the town, and outside the "portion of Naboth." But Divine providence so ordered matters that vengeance for the sin of Ahab was exacted upon the very scene of his guilt, and a prophecy made, probably by Elisha, years previously, and treasured up in the memory of Jehu (verse 26), was fulfilled to the letter. *Hammond*.

**22. What peace, etc.** Joram had asked the usual question, "Is it peace?" meaning simply, "Is all well?" Jehu replies with an-

other question, "How can all be well, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her many witchcrafts continue?"

**23. Joram turned his hands and fled.** The meaning here is that Joram *ordered his charioteer* to turn round and drive back to the town. Jehu's words left no doubt as to his hostile intention; and so Joram, who had probably come out unarmed and unattended, felt compelled to seek for safety in flight. Flying, he shouted to his nephew the two words—"Treason, Ahaziah!" B. C.

**24.** Too late now doth wretched Jehoram turn his chariot and flee, and cry, "Treason, O Ahaziah." There was treason before, O Jehoram: thy treason against the majesty of God is now revenged by the treason of Jehu against thee. That fatal shaft, notwithstanding the swift pace of both the chariots, is directed to the heart of Jehoram. There is no erring of those feathers which are guided by the hand of destiny. *Bp. H.*

**25. Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite.** "Take up the body," that is, "and cast it into the plot of ground which once belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite, and was forfeited to the crown at his death (1 K. 21:15), and taken possession of by Ahab" (verse 16). The reason for the order follows. *For remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the Lord laid this burden upon him.* Jehu recalls his captain's recollection to an occurrence which was deeply impressed upon his own. "When thou and I rode together after Ahab" probably means "when we two stood behind Ahab in his chariot."

**26. I will requite thee in this plat, saith the Lord.** This was the gist of the prophecy, which ran as follows: "*In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.*" *Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the Lord.* The evil prophesied against Ahab had been formally and expressly deferred to his son's days on Ahab's repentance (cf. 1 K. 21:29). *Hammond.*—On that very spot, or near it, Naboth's own blood had been shed, and, as this verse shows (verse 26), not his alone, but the blood of his sons. Thither, after the murder, Ahab went down to take possession of the vineyard, and there, when he arrived, he found Elijah standing, waiting to denounce upon him the doom of blood. This was not all, for among those who rode with Ahab that day were two of his captains, one of

them Bidkar, the other this Jehu, who heard the prophetic announcements against Ahab and his family. That prophecy, probably, had never altogether left the mind of Jehu, but now it came home to him with fresh force as he saw it actually fulfilled by his own hand. Bidkar, too, as it chanced, was there, and Jehu recalled to him the prophetic oracle. Then, to give it literal accomplishment, he bade Bidkar give orders that the corpse of Jehoram should be thrown into the plat of ground which formerly belonged to Naboth. J. O.

How just are the judgments of God! It was in the field of Naboth, wherein Jehoram met with Jehu: that very ground called to him for blood. And now this new avenger remembers that prophecy, which he heard from the mouth of Elijah, in that very place, following the heels of Ahab; and is careful to perform it. What a resemblance there is betwixt the death of the father and the son—Ahab and Jehoram! Both are slain in their chariot; both with an arrow; both repay their blood to Naboth; and how perfect is this retaliation! Face doth not more answer to face than sin to sin. *Bp. H.*

**26. And the blood of his sons.** The murder of Naboth's sons is here for the first time mentioned. As the removal of the sons was necessary if the vineyard was to escheat to Ahab, we can well understand that Jezebel would take care to clear them out of the way. She was not likely to do any work which she undertook by halves. B. C.

**27, 28.** Ahaziah king of Judah was pursued and slain in a little time, and not far off (verses 27, 28). Though he was now in Joram's company, he had not been slain but that he was joined with the house of Ahab both in affinity and in iniquity; he was one of them; so he had made himself by his sins, and therefore he must fare as they fare. Yet perhaps he had not at this time fallen with them if he had not been found in company with them. It is a dangerous thing to associate with evil-doers; we may be entangled both in guilt and misery by it. II.—Ahaziah continued his flight to Megidde, where he died. A slightly different account of the manner of his death is given in 2 Chron. 22:9. Whatever the precise circumstances of the death, we cannot but see in it a righteous retribution for his own sins, and an example of the end of evil association. Through his mother Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel, he was brought into close and friendly relations with the court of Samaria, and sharing in the crimes of Ahab's house, shared also in their fate. It was his visit to King Jehoram which

immediately brought down this doom upon him. J. O.

**29. In the eleventh year.** We read in chap. 8 : 25 that Ahaziah ascended the throne in Jehoram's *twelfth* year. The discrepancy may be explained as arising either from two modes of calculating the regnal years of kings (*Keil*), or from two ways of reckoning the accession of Ahaziah, who is likely to have been regent for his father during at least one year.

**30. Jezebel painted her face.** Literally, "put her eyes in antimony"—*i.e.*, dyed the upper and under eyelids with a pigment prepared from antimony, a common practice in the East, even at the present day. The effect is at once to increase the apparent size of the eye, and to give it unnatural brilliancy. No doubt the practice was very ancient among the Oriental nations. **And tired her head.** Foreseeing her fate, Jezebel determined to keep up her regal splendor to the last, and painted her eyes and tired her head, and no doubt put on her royal robes, that she might die as became a queen, in true royal array. B. C.—While one loathes the character of the woman, it is impossible not to admire the boldness and spirit with which she faces the inevitable. Her proud, imperious nature comes out in her last actions. She paints her eyelids with antimony, tires her head, and adorns her person, as if she was preparing for some festal celebration. Then she plants herself at the window, and, when Jehu appears, assails him with bitter taunting words. "Is it peace, thou Zimri, thy master's murderer?" she mockingly asked. What a power for evil this woman had been in Israel! What a power, with her strong intellect and will, she might have been for good! J. O.

**33. And he said, Throw her down.** A splendid example of the man's prompt and bold and unscrupulous decision. A queen, a queen-mother, always more tenderly regarded than an ordinary queen-regnant, a princess in her own right (see verse 34), daughter of a neighboring and powerful potentate, settled in her kingdom for over thirty years, the most powerful person in the State during that entire period, backed up by the numerous and dominant party of her coreligionists, she is to Jehu nothing but a wicked woman who is in his way; she inspires him with no awe, she does not even touch him with any feeling of respect. "Throw her down." History presents no parallel to such an indignity. The boldness of Jehu communicated itself to those whom he addressed; and the eunuchs violently seized the person of the

queen, and precipitated her from the window to the ground below. *Hammond.*

**34.** He passed over her, and entered the palace, the hoofs of his horses and his chariot-wheels red with her blood, without pausing to see whether she lived or died. He took possession, and after awhile sat down to refresh himself with meat and drink after that morning's bloody work. The coolness of this iron-hearted man is astonishing, but not without parallel. *Kitto.*

**25-37.** *Retribution may be long in coming, but it comes at last.* Yet throughout all history evil-disposed men have persisted in wicked and cruel conduct just as if it was not only possible, but probable, that retribution would be escaped. The lesson thus needs continually to be impressed on men, that sooner or later retribution *must* come—that there is no escape from it. Retribution must come—

*Because God rules the universe, and God is just.* Disbelief in retribution is essentially atheistic. It implies either that there is no God, or that God is without one or more of those attributes which make Him God. A just God must have the will to punish; an omnipotent God must have the power to punish. If a so-called God did not punish sin, he must be either not just or not omnipotent, or not either; but then he would not be God. As Bähr says, "A God without vengeance—*i.e.*, who cannot and will not punish, is no God, but a divinity fashioned from one's thoughts."

*Because God has declared that it shall come, and God is true.* God has said to each man, through his conscience, that He will punish sin. Remorse and regret, the dissatisfaction of a guilty conscience, are such punishment begun. In His Word God has expressly declared that "He will reward every man according to his works;" that He "will by no means clear the guilty;" that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be on every soul of man that doeth evil." Nothing is more plainly taught in the whole of Scripture, from the beginning to the end, than requital, retribution, condign punishment.

*Because any negative instance that can be produced will only show a delay, not an abrogation of the sentence.* Infinite time is at the disposal of the Almighty. Men are impatient, and if retribution does not overtake the sinner speedily, are apt to conclude that it will never overtake him. But with the Almighty "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The important thing to be borne in

mind is the end ; and the end will not be reached till " the judgment is set, and the books are opened," and men are " judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works." Punishment may be long in coming—the ungodly may continue during their whole lifetime in prosperity. But there remains a future. *Hammond.*

## Section 24.

### REIGN OF JEHU (*Concluded*).

#### SLAYS AHAH'S SEVENTY SONS, AHAZIAH'S BRETHREN, AND THE WORSHIPPERS OF BAAL. HIS DEATH.

2 KINGS 10 : 1-36.

1 Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters, and sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, even the elders, and unto them that brought up *the sons* of Ahab, 2 saying, And now as soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master's sons are with 3 you, and there are with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour ; look ye out the best and meetest of your master's sons, and set him on his father's throne, and fight 4 for your master's house. But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, the two kings 5 stood not before him : how then shall we stand ? And he that was over the household, and he that was over the city, the elders also, and they that brought up *the children*, sent to Jehu, saying, We are thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us ; we will not make 6 any man king : do thou that which is good in thine eyes. Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If ye be on my side, and if ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to-morrow this time. Now the king's sons, being seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, which 7 brought them up. And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slew them, even seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent 8 them unto him to Jezreel. And there came a messenger, and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. And he said, Lay ye them in two heaps at the 9 entering in of the gate until the morning. And it came to pass in the morning, that he went out, and stood, and said to all the people, Ye be righteous : behold, I conspired against my 10 master, and slew him : but who smote all these ? Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab : for 11 the LORD hath done that which he spake by his servant Elijah. So Jehu smote all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his familiar friends, and 12 his priests, until he left him none remaining. And he arose and departed, and went to 13 Samaria. And as he was at the shearing house of the shepherds in the way, Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, Who are ye ? And they answered, We are the brethren of Ahaziah : and we go down to salute the children of the king and the chil- 14 dren of the queen. And he said, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and slew them at the pit of the shearing house, even two and forty men ; neither left he any of them. 15 And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him : and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart ? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave 16 him his hand ; and he took him up to him into the chariot. And he said, Come with me, 17 and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot. And when he came to Samaria, he smote all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, accord- 18 ing to the word of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah. And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little ; but Jehu shall serve him much. 19 Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his worshippers, and all his priests ; let none be wanting : for I have a great sacrifice *to do* to Baal ; whosoever shall be wanting,

he shall not live. But Jehu did it in subtilly, to the intent that he might destroy the wor-  
 20 shippers of Baal. And Jehu said, Sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal. And they pro-  
 21 claimed it. And Jehu sent through all Israel : and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that  
 there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal ; and the  
 22 house of Baal was filled from one end to another. And he said unto him that was over the  
 vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth  
 23 vestments. And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal ; and  
 he said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of  
 24 the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only. And they went in to offer sac-  
 rifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had appointed him fourscore men without, and said,  
 If any of the men whom I bring into your hands escape, *he that letteth him go*, his life shall  
 25 be for the life of him. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the  
 burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, and slay them ; let  
 none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword ; and the guard and the  
 26 captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal. And they brought forth  
 27 the pillars that were in the house of Baal, and burned them. And they brake down the  
 pillar of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught house, unto this day.  
 28, 29 Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Ne-  
 bat, wherewith he made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, *to wit*, the golden calves  
 30 that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan. And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou  
 hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, *and* hast done unto the house  
 of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit  
 31 on the throne of Israel. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of  
 Israel, with all his heart : he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, wherewith he made  
 Israel to sin.

32 In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short : and Hazael smote them in all the coasts  
 33 of Israel ; from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites,  
 and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.  
 34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, are they not written  
 35 in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ? And Jehu slept with his fathers : and  
 36 they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead. And the time that  
 Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years.

**1-28.** THE revolution initiated by the destruction of Joram and Jezebel is here traced through its second and its third stages. In verses 1-11 is related the action taken by him, so far as the descendants of Ahab were concerned, and his success in ridding himself of all rivals possessed of so strong a claim. Verses 12-14 relate his dealings with another body of Ahab's relations, belonging to the neighboring kingdom of Judah. In verses 15-28 an account is given of the still more bloody and more sweeping measures by which he cowed the party opposed to him, and firmly established his dynasty in the Israelite kingdom. *Hammond.*

**1. And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria.** By "sons" we must understand "male descendants." Most of the "seventy" were probably his grandsons (see verse 3) ; some may have been great-grandsons. They lived in Samaria ; since Samaria was the principal residence of the court, Jezreel being simply a country palace. *Hammond.*—The term "sons" is evidently used for descendants, since there were

among them children of Jehoram. (See verses 2, 3, 6, 13.) B. C.

**2-5.** To the persons in charge of the young princes in Samaria, Jehu *wrote*—for we now begin to hear of written communications more frequently than of old—a curious epistle. He assumed their devotion to the house of Ahab, and told them that, since they had the resources of the capital at their disposal, they had better set up one of the likeliest of the young princes as king, and uphold his cause by force of arms. There was a latent irony in this letter ; as the writer must well have known the real state of the case, and how little likely it was that they would take up the cause of a fallen house—known to have been doomed of God. It so happened. The elders of Samaria, having conferred on the subject, sent in reply their unreserved submission to Jehu, declaring their readiness to obey his orders in all things. *Kitto.*

**6, 7, 8. King's sons.** Some of the royal children were actual sons of Jehoram, while others were probably his nephews—are now called in a general way "the king's sons."

8. The "two" heaps were probably placed one on either side of the gateway, to strike terror into the partisans of the late dynasty as they passed in and out of the town.

9. A serious address to those Jezreelites who had gone out of their town to see the sight. "Ye are just," says Jehu, "and can judge aright. Judge between me and the party of Ahab who accuse me. I indeed slew my master, but they have slain these seventy youths." Jehu keeps back the fact that they had done it at his command. B. C.—He concealed the orders to this effect that he had sent—and which no one else dared disclose—desirous of making it appear that this slaughter had been the spontaneous act of the leading men of the metropolis, in testimony of their adhesion to his cause. *Kitto*.

11. Having killed Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Jezebel, having secured the adhesion of the chief men in Samaria, and effected the destruction of all those who might naturally have claimed the succession and involved him in civil war, Jehu proceeded to greater lengths. He "slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel"—the princesses probably, as well as the princes—and further put to death all the leading partisans of the dethroned dynasty, the "great men," perhaps even those who had worked his bloody will at Samaria, and the intimate friends and supporters of the house. *Hammond*.

13. **The brethren of Ahaziah.** Not the actual brothers of Ahaziah, who had all been slain by the Arabs before his accession to the throne (2 Chron. 21 : 17 ; 22 : 1) ; but his nephews, the sons of his brothers, as we learn from 2 Chron. 22 : 8. It is remarkable that they should have penetrated so far into the kingdom of Israel without having heard of the revolution. **The children of the king and of the queen**—*i.e.*, "the sons of Jehoram, and the children (sons and grandsons) of the queen-mother, Jezebel."

14. **Neither left he any of them.** These princes, it must be remembered, were descendants of Ahab through Athaliah, and so included in Elijah's sentence (1 K. 21 : 21). B. C.

15. **Jehonadab, the son of Rechab.** [Called Jonadab (Jer. 35 : 6, 14, 16, 19). It appears from 1 Chron. 2 : 55 that this personage belonged to the tribe of the Kenites, one of the most ancient in Palestine. Their origin is unknown, but their habits were certainly those of Arabs. They were constant nomads, and are found in various parts of Palestine at different

periods—among the Midianites in the time of Moses, who took his wife from them—in Galilee, under the early judges (Judg. 4 : 10-17)—mixed up with Amalek, in the reign of Saul (1 S. 15 : 6). Owing to their connection with Moses, they formed a friendship with the Israelites, accompanied them in their wanderings, and finally received a location in the wilderness of Judah (Judg. 1 : 16). The character of this chief, Jonadab, is best seen in the rule which he established for his descendants (Jer. 35 : 6, 7)—a rule said to be still observed at the present day (Wolff, Pierotti). B. C.

**If it be, give me thine hand.** Jehu merely means to say, "If thou art heart and soul with me in the matter, put out thy hand; and I will take thee into my chariot." Jehu intended at once to do honor to the Kenite chief, and to strengthen his own position by being seen to be so familiar with him. **And he—*i.e.*, Jehonadab—gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot.** There was always room in a chariot for at least three or four persons—the charioteer and the owner of the chariot in front, and one or two guards behind. *Hammond*.

Doubtless his heart was thoroughly in accord with Jehu's heart in the purpose of rooting out the Baal worship. It is impossible that its sensuality and effeminacy (being joined with that of Astarte) should not have been revolting to a man of Jonadab's temperament and race, a man of the free open air, with its necessary abstinence and scorn of luxury. The spiritual nature of such a man, quick and responsive from his constant communion with nature, would be the first to feel the power of teachings such as Elijah's, and it is not surprising that he was moved by them to lay upon his tribe, in a time when luxury and indulgence were eating out the heart of the nation, the laws of abstinent and simple living, which, as we find, they obeyed for more than three hundred years (Jer. 35 : 1-10). *Houghton*.

As a protest against the corruption and luxury of his time, Jehonadab had withdrawn from life in cities, and had laid upon his sons a vow that they would drink no wine, neither build houses, nor plant vineyards, but would dwell in tents all their days. To get this man of ascetic virtue on his side would, Jehu felt, give color and repute to his proceedings. It is noticeable how anxious men who make no pretensions to godliness often are to get the countenance and approval of good men for their deeds. Hypocrisy has been called the homage

which vice pays to virtue, and this desire for the approval of a holy man is, in another form, the tribute of worldly policy to the superior power of character. J. O.

In how many fields is the anxious inquiry made by faithful pastors, "Is thine heart right?" To this the response may be made by some, "It is." What more reasonable than the further demand, "Give me thy hand?" The Church of God needs to-day as perhaps never before that every one whose heart is with its cause should pledge his fidelity by open confession and deliberate act. Jehonadab was not afraid to give his hand to the man who had taken upon himself the avenging of the honor of God's name, "and he took him up into his chariot." Before the eyes of all Israel he identified himself with this struggling cause. He did not wait for its complete triumph. He did not ask for its ideal perfection. He did require that it should renounce every doubtful follower. Prompt, decisive, unashamed, the man accepted the issue and the challenge, and to the loyalty of his heart he added the open pledging of his palm. *Interior.*

**Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord.** Of Jehu's "zeal," in itself considered, there could be no question. His zeal is seen in his eager haste to attain his ends, in his scouting of difficulties, in the thoroughness with which each piece of work is accomplished, in the quickness and skill of his devices. Such zeal is in large measure a natural endowment—a thing of temperament. Still, it is an essential to success in practical undertakings, spiritual as well as worldly. "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing" (Gal. 4: 18). More doubtful is the quality of Jehu's zeal "for the Lord." Ostensibly it was God's will Jehu was carrying out; outwardly it was God's work he was doing. He may even have persuaded himself into the belief that he was honestly and disinterestedly serving God's ends. But the result showed that in serving God it was really his own ends Jehu was serving. His zeal was impure. It was largely inspired by selfish ambition, by considerations of policy, by the thought of the reward to himself. It was impure also in its admixture of craft and worldly expediency. Similarly, how much that passes for "zeal for the Lord" in this world is of the same impure nature! How much of it is inspired by sectarian rivalry, by party spirit, by the desire to make "a fair show in the flesh" (Gal. 6: 12), by self-interest and worldly policy. How largely is it alloyed with human passion and intrigue! Truly we

do well to examine ourselves. Zeal is to be tested not by its passing and spasmodic exhibitions, but by its power of endurance amid good report and evil report. J. O.

Jehu's zeal burned brightly and scorched up everything before it as long as it was fanned by the excitement of self-interest and a naturally stormy temperament; but the whole heart was not in it; it was "zeal for God when it answers my purpose," not "zeal for God, cost me what it may." He was a man who would serve God as long as by so doing he could serve himself. The truth which Jehu did not see, and which we ought to see, is that God, if He be served at all, should be served with all our heart, and soul, and strength; that our service must be complete and free, as from those who feel that all they can do must fall infinitely short of a perfect worship of the infinite God. *Bp. H. Goodwin.*

There is such a thing as a factitious zeal in the active service of religion; and that forms a ground of high pretension. You may have seen examples. Men in restless activity; full of scheme, and expedient, and experiment, and ostentatious enterprise; to promote, apparently, the work of God, the Christian cause; seeming ready to compass sea and land for the purpose. But an attentive observer could easily descry that the cause of God was a very secondary concern with them, even at the best interpretation. Their grand object, whether they were conscious of it or not, was their own notoriety; and the cause of religion happened to be that which would most effectually serve this purpose. "Come see *my* zeal for the Lord of hosts." The successes and progress, real or pretended, of a good cause, were recounted and proclaimed by them in no other form of story than that of their own exploits for it. J. F.

There is nothing in which men more deceive themselves than in what the world calls *zeal*. There are so many passions which hide themselves under it, and so many mischiefs arising from it, that some have gone so far as to say it would have been for the benefit of mankind if it had never been reckoned in the catalogue of virtues. *Spectator.*—Unholy ambition, a compound of the love of renown and the love of power, drives the ploughshare of ruin over the fairest portions of the world. It turns men into Ishmaelites. It reigns in the human heart from early childhood to the extremest age—from the tiny rival for maternal caresses up to the contender for a throne. The speciality of its unfitness for religious service is not so much



that over the whole face of society it produces such a struggling of human spirits for mastery and power; but that the whole contest is pushed without a throb or a prayer for anything but personal aggrandizement; that it has no mercy and no forgiveness for any man, action or event which obstructs the designs of its inflexible ambition; that its strides are over that very truth and equity and happiness and order, to abet which God asks for the heart of humanity. *C. White.*

Let us take heed that we do not sometimes call that zeal for God and His Gospel which is nothing else but our own temptations and stormy passions. True zeal is a sweet, heavenly and gentle flame, which maketh us active for God, but always within the sphere of love. It never calls for fire from heaven to consume those that differ a little from us in their apprehensions. It is like that kind of lightning (which philosophers speak of) that melts the sword within, but singeth not the scabbard; it strives to save the soul, but it hurteth not the body. *Cudworth.*

**17. Spake to Elijah.** This emphatic reiteration (compare verse 10) marks, first, how in the mind of the writer all this history is viewed as deriving its special interest from its being so full and complete an accomplishment of Elijah's prophecies; and, secondly, how at the time Jehu carefully put forward the plea that what he did had this object. It does not indicate that a single-minded wish to execute God's will was Jehu's predominant motive. Even where he most strictly fulfilled the letter of prophecies, he was working for himself, not for God; and hence vengeance was denounced upon his house even for the very "blood of Jezreel" (Hos. 1 : 4). *B. C.*

**18-28.** Having thus obeyed the Divine injunction to "avenge the blood of the prophets and servants of the Lord at the hand of Jezebel and Ahab," Jehu next proceeded to crush out the worship of Baal which Ahab and Jezebel had established in Israel. *B.*

**18.** The serving of false gods was by the law of Israel a capital offence (De. 13). It was right, therefore, for Jehu to use his power to put an end to the practice, and to inflict upon the perpetrators of this crime the penalty of the law. But in doing this he made use of falsehood and deceit; and his efforts to extinguish the worship of Baal were prompted not by a sincere loyalty to Jehovah, but with the view of establishing his own power. The adherents of Baal were naturally partial to the family of Ahab. If Jehu could exterminate

them, he would rid himself of a party who were likely to be hostile to him, and he would at the same time secure the attachment of those who favored the old order of things. *W. H. G.*

**19. All the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. Whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live.** His absence would be regarded as an act of contumacy verging on rebellion, and so as deserving of capital punishment. **But Jehu did it in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal.** "Subtilty" was characteristic of Jehu, who always preferred to gain his ends by cunning rather than in a straightforward way. Idolaters were by the law liable to death, and Jehu would have had a perfect right to crush the Baal worship throughout the land, by sending his emissaries everywhere, with orders to slay all whom they found engaged in it. But to draw some thousands of his subjects by false pretences into a trap, and then to kill them in it for doing what he had himself invited them to do, was an act that was wholly unjustifiable, and that savored, not of the wisdom which is from above, but of that bastard wisdom which is "earthly, sensual, devilish." Jehu's religious reformation did not succeed, and it was conducted in such a way that it did not deserve to succeed. A little more honest boldness and a little less frequent resort to subterfuge and craft might have had a different result, and have been better both for himself and for his people. *Hammond.*

I can commend the zeal of Jehu; I cannot commend the fraud of Jehu; we may come to our end even by crooked ways. He that bade him to smite for Him did not bid him to lie for Him. Falsehood, though it be but tentative, is neither needed nor approved by the God of truth: if policy have allowed officious untruths; religion never. *Bp. H.*—Jehu inflicted the merited punishment on these criminals, not by a fearless application of the law or a conscientious discharge of the regal office, but by perfidious subtilty and idolatrous hypocrisy. *Gisborne.*

**20, 21.** *Jehu summons all the prophets, priests, and servants of Baal to a great sacrifice in the Temple of Baal at Samaria.* Such solemn assemblies for religious observances were common among all nations and under all systems of religion. From every part of the land where altars to Baal had been erected all the resident priests were gathered, until the great "House of Baal was full." They came in the expectation that Jehu was about to inaugurate his

reign by the fresh enthronement of their god as the supreme object of worship. So had he led them to believe, in order to entrap and destroy them.

**22-24.** *Preliminary preparations for the slaughter.* First, he decked the victims from the vestry-room of the temple in gorgeous priestly garments. This was in seeming deference to their sacred office. Next, he, with Jehonadab the Rechabite, went among them and bade them search among themselves, that no servants of Jehovah might remain in their temple. His anxiety in this matter, too, seemed to express his zealous desire to exclude all the intruders from this special sacrifice. His real purpose was to make sure that no worshipper of Jehovah should be slain. Lastly, he placed eighty armed men without at the entrance, and charged them with the merciless slaughter of all within. B.

**23.** Jehu's real object was undoubtedly to save the lives of any "servants of Jehovah" who might incautiously have mixed themselves up with the Baal-worshippers, out of curiosity, or to have their share in the general holiday. That he should have thought such a thing possible or even probable indicates the general laxity of the time and the want of any sharp line of demarcation between the adherents of the two religions. He cleverly masked his desire for the safety of his own religionists under a show of keen anxiety that the coming ceremonies should not be profaned by the presence of scoffers or indifferent persons. *Hammond.*

**25-26.** *Massacre of the entire multitude and destruction of the images of Baal.* The temple of Baal, like that at Jerusalem, had outer courts or enclosures where the altar was, and the sacrifices were offered. It had also an inner fortress-like sanctuary, called here "the city of the house of Baal," where stood the great stone image of Baal, surrounded by smaller wooden images of his fellow-gods. Into the outer enclosures, thronged with the defenceless priests and people, at Jehu's command the armed guard now entered and faithfully executed their work of slaughter. Then, when none were left alive, they penetrated into the inner court or "city" and brought forth the images of wood and burned them amid the heaped-up corpses. Last of all, they shattered the great stone image of Baal, and razed the entire structure to the ground, leaving the mass of debris as a sepulchre of the underlying dead, and a token of the Divine judgment against this impious and loathsome false worship. "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel." B.

**28.** The writer, picturing the wild scene, sums up with a touch of exultation: "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel," where note the emphatic prominence of the three names of the king, the god and the nation. That is the vindication of the terrible deed. A. M. —The measures taken were effectual; the worship of Baal was put down, and is not said to have been revived in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. Moloch worship seems to have taken its place (see chap. 17:17). *Hammond.*

The slaughter of that wicked house of Ahab and of the Baal priests was the act of Divine justice, and the question is simply whether that justice was entitled to slay them. To that question believers in a Divine providence can give but one answer. The destruction of Baal worship and the annihilation of its stronghold in Ahab's family were sufficient reasons, as even we can see, for such a deed. To bring in Jehu into the problem is unnecessary. He was the sword, but God's was the hand that struck. It is not for men to arraign the Lord of life and death for His methods and times of sending death to evil-doers. Granted that the "long-suffering" which is "not willing that any should perish" speaks more powerfully to our hearts than the justice which smites with death, the later and more blessed revelation is possible and precious only on the foundation of the former. Nor will a loose-braced generation like ours, which affects to be horrified at the thought of the "wrath of God," and recoils from the contemplation of His judgments, ever reach the innermost secrets of the tenderness of His love. From the merely human point of view, we may say that revolutions are not made with rose-water, and that, at all crises in a nation's history, when some ancient evil is to be thrown off, and some powerful system is to be crushed, there will be violence, which easy-going people, who have never passed through like times, will hold up their hands at in horror and with cheap censure. No doubt we have a higher law than Jehu knew, and Christ has put His own gentle commandment of love in the place of what was "said to them of old time." But let us, while we obey it for ourselves, and abjure violence and blood, judge the men of old "according to that which they had, and not according to that which they had not." Jehu's bloody deeds are not held up for admiration. His obedience is what is praised and rewarded. Well for us if we obey our better law as faithfully. A. M.

The idolatrous defection in Israel imperilled at once the nation and the Church. If con-

tinued, it would utterly destroy not only the national hopes of the Jews, but the world's hope of redemption to be developed along the line of the covenant people. All nations had a stake in bringing Israel back to the worship of one God and keeping true the words of the Lord's prophets. Idolatry must be destroyed by the destruction of those who had set up its altars. And therefore, for the salvation of the nation and the Church, the supreme Lord of nations ordered the destruction of the idolaters. That it was a just punishment of their own sins is also apparent. They had carried on a most ruthless and relentless persecution of the Lord's people, their hands had been steeped in the blood of the saints, and their fell purpose was to blot from the records of Israel forever the worship of the true God. And that God, who by His providence is ever punishing sin, did it in this case by a direct command. Nor is His agency more real in the one case than in the other. Therefore, Jehu is not condemned in the Bible, and is not to be condemned by us, for executing vengeance on the false prophets. Behind the king stands God, who anointed the king for this work of revolution. To say that God permitted but did not authorize the work of Jehu is to solve no difficulty and to speak in the face of the record. If the Bible makes anything clear, it is that in the exigencies of Old Testament times God assumed the direct punishment of people and the protection of His cause by methods which differ from those usually accounted providential only in making men the declared and commanded instruments of His justice. *C. L. Thompson.*

*For God's work of salvation He uses consecrated men.* Jehu was of use as a destroyer, as an image breaker, but he was no national or moral reformer in the true sense. He was of no spiritual benefit to others. For such work God uses only those who themselves have received spiritual blessing. *C. H. I.*

Introduced by Ahab with his queen Jezebel from Phœnicia, Baal worship was thus extinguished with his dynasty. And as this open displacing of Jehovah by an idol was the pre-eminent sin of Ahab, by which his wickedness was distinguished above even that of Jeroboam, so the leading adherents of Ahab's dynasty were specially characterized by this form of idolatrous worship. One, therefore, who sought to obliterate all remaining influences of Ahab's power must eradicate this worship out of the land. It was not, then, zeal for God, but a politic regard to his own interests that led Jehu to lay the foundation of

a new dynasty in the destruction of the priests and the demolition of the temple of Baal. The party of Baalites was small as compared with those who still maintained the calf worship of Jeroboam. Yet its power was great, having been so long in possession of prominent offices. Its basis and rallying point being now exterminated, Jehu could look for abiding support from the mass of the nation. Therefore, having coolly perpetrated this great slaughter from motives of selfish policy, from the same motives

**29-31.** *Jehu falls into the exact way of Jeroboam, in worship and life.* To the law of the Lord he gave no heed. It had no influence over his heart, nor effect upon his life. He renewed the first great breach that had been made by Jeroboam in the form and spirit of worship. He revived among the people an utter disregard of the *second* commandment from Sinai, after himself enacting God's fearful judgment against those who had led the people in impious disobedience to the *first*. The Baal worship was the "having other gods before Jehovah." The calf worship was a professed worship of Jehovah, but under the form of an image. Policy and self-interest led him to fall back into Jeroboam's way of worship. The larger part of the people preferred this way. And Jeroboam's own reason for devising and using it still existed: it prevented the return of the people to worship at Jerusalem. But Jehu was no worshipper of Jehovah under any form. He had obeyed special Divine commands in the line of his soldier-like tastes. He had slain and slaughtered, and driven over a pathway of corpses to the throne. But self-interest had prompted his obedience thus far.

Yet (and it is a strangely instructive fact) God expresses approval of his obedience. He even rewards it with a great and distinguishing favor, prolonging his dynasty upon the throne of Israel beyond the period of any other family. In this approval there is no commendation of the falsehood and treachery by which the end was reached. The destruction of Ahab's house and of Baal's worship was "right in His eyes," and "according to all that was in His heart." This, when commanded, Jehu had zealously fulfilled. And, without reference to any wrong method or selfish spirit in the doing, God shows Himself accurately just, and more than generous, in the reward He gives. Thus He shows that He will never be in debt to any man. With more than generous measure He will repay the little good that men may do in obedience to His command.

And in the face of such Divine promise and reward Jehu's life was like Jeroboam's—self-seeking and indulgent. After this, we hear of no obedience to God, and of no further approval. Enthroned by God's appointment and hand, he secures his power by his own policy. Receiving supreme advancement and an excess of earthly gifts, he intimates no grateful feeling, manifests no faith in God, no care for His will. Thus for twenty-eight years, during which "the Lord began to cut Israel short" (verse 32), on account of their continued disobedience and counterfeit worship, Jehu led them in the sins of Jeroboam. Untaught by multiplying calamities which gradually but surely narrowed the confines of the nation, to the end king and people together bowed before altars and images reared in express violation of God's commands. B.

So far as might serve the elevation of Jehu to the crown of Israel, to setting him on the throne, so far he goes in the ways of God's command, but no farther. So let God command anything that may hit with a man's own ends, and be suitable to him, and he seems to be very obedient to God; but let God go on further, and require something that will not serve his turn, that will not agree with his own ends; and here God may seek for a servant; as for him he will go no farther. *Burroughs*.

Here the motives which influenced Jehu stand displayed. Though raised to the throne by the hand of God, he now looked for the security of it to his own policy. Destitute of faith in Him to whom he was indebted for all, he trusted not to the King of kings for the permanence of the gifts which He bestowed. Destitute of gratitude to his gracious Benefactor, he returned for unmerited kindness habitual and presumptuous disobedience. While regard to the commandments of God conducted him in the path of advancement, he was eager to obey; but now, to his worldly apprehension, obedience and interest ceased to coincide. He who had been exalted to sovereign power, for the express purpose of annihilating idolaters, converted his authority and example into instruments of upholding and perpetuating idolatry among his subjects. Nor was his dereliction of God the crime of a moment or the error of sudden surprise. During a reign of twenty-eight years, unmoved by the judicial calamities with which the Lord "cut Israel short," this obdurate monarch bowed down, together with his people, before the images erected in violation of God's com-

mands, before altars reared in express opposition to His holy temple. *Gisborne*.

**30. And the Lord said unto Jehu.** Probably by the mouth of Elisha. Jehu had been expressly ordered to "smite the house of Ahab" (2 K. 9:7); and thus to a certain extent his bloody measures were acts of obedience, for which God might see fit to assign him a temporal reward. **Thy children to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.** This was accomplished in the persons of Jehoahaz (2 K. 13:1), Joash (*ibid.*, verse 9), Jeroboam (14:16), and Zachariah (15:8), the son, grandson, great-grandson and great-great-grandson of Jehu. It is noticeable that no other family sat upon the throne of Israel so long. The house of Omri, which furnished four kings, held the crown for three generations only and for less than fifty years—that of Jehu reigned for five generations and for above a hundred years. B. C.

**31. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of Jehovah, the God of Israel, with all his heart.** He abolished the worship of Baal, but did not keep up the worship of God nor walk in His law. He showed great care and zeal for the rooting out of a false religion, but in the true religion showed no care, took no heed, lived at large, was not at all solicitous to please God and do His duty; took no heed to the Scriptures, to the prophets, to his own conscience, but walked at all adventures. Those that are heedless, it is to be feared, are graceless; for where there is a good principle in the heart it will make men cautious and circumspect, desirous to please God and jealous of doing anything to offend Him. H.

He contented himself with rooting out Baal, but left the calves. That shows the impurity of his "zeal," which flamed only against what it was for his advantage to destroy, and left the more popular and older idolatry undisturbed. Obedience has to be "all in all, or not at all." We may not compound for sins we are inclined to, by zeal against those we have no mind to. Our consciences are apt to have insensitive spots in them, like witch-marks. We often think it enough to remove the grosser evils, and leave the less. But white ants will eat up a carcass faster than a lion. Putting away Baal is of little use if we keep the calves at Dan and Bethel. Nothing but walking in the law of the Lord "with all the heart" will secure our walking safely. A. M.

Personal ambition had been at the bottom of his heart, and he had destroyed that form of

idolatry which was identified with the house of Ahab. But having achieved his end, he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord. His zeal for righteousness did not turn inward and burn up his own sins. When there was nothing left to destroy, his occupation was gone. The same thirst for blood which had marked him passed down, a ghastly bequeathment, to his children, and brought the Divine curse upon them. *W. Benham.*

**33.** There is other evidence, besides this, that Hazael was one of the most warlike of the Syrian kings. We find him, on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser II., mentioned as a stubborn adversary of the Assyrian arms. In the seventeenth campaign of Shalmaneser a great battle was fought between the two monarchs. Hazael brought into the field more than twelve hundred chariots, but was defeated and obliged to retreat, his camp falling into the hands of the enemy. Four years later Shalmaneser invaded Hazael's territory, and took, according to his own account, four cities or fortresses belonging to him. He does not claim, however, to have made him a tributary; and by his later annals it is evident that he avoided further contest, preferring to turn his arms in other directions. *Hammond.*—In Jehu's reign we are brought into contact for the first time, since the mention of Chedorlaomer, with the great monarchies of Western Asia. We possess in the British Museum an obelisk of black basalt, brought by Mr. Layard from Nimroud, which was set up by Shalmaneser I., king of Assyria, to commemorate his victories. It appears that, while Benhadad II. and Hazael were warring against Israel, they had to sustain a conflict with Assyria; and among the tributaries to Shalmaneser appears the name of "Jehu (or Yahua), the son of Khumri" (Omri). The erroneous patronymic is accounted for by Omri's being regarded as the founder of the kingdom of Samaria, the name of the city itself appearing on the obelisk in the form "Beth-khum-ri" (*house of Omri*). P. S.

**36. In Samaria was twenty and eight years.** Twenty-eight years was a long reign for an Israelite king, only exceeded by one other king in the entire list—viz., Jeroboam II., who is said in chap. 14:28 to have reigned forty-one years. The kings of Judah were longer lived. *Hammond.*

The state of the kingdom under Jehu, and still more under his son and successor Jehoahaz, was, in a *political* aspect, a very unfortunate

one; for Hazael, who had been raised according to prophecy to the throne of Damascus as a Divine scourge to Israel repeatedly and successfully invaded the land, treating with especial harshness the part of Palestine east of the Jordan (Amos 1:3), which became for some time subject to the kingdom of Damascus. During this period of distress the opposition of the prophets was withdrawn; nay, when the kingdom was reduced to the last extremity it was by the mouth of the prophets that Divine deliverance was once more announced, the dying Elisha first promising to the dejected Joash, the son and successor of Jehoahaz, victory over the Syrians (2 K. 13:14 sqq.), and Jonah, the son of Amittai, subsequently predicting the restoration of the ancient boundaries of the kingdom (14:25). Joash was successful in his wars against Damascus and Judah; but the glory of the kingdom was still further enhanced under his valiant son Jeroboam II., who not only restored the ancient limits of the kingdom, but even conquered a portion of Syria. External success, however, effected no internal change; on the contrary, its internal corruption continuing to increase, it was during the period in which, to human eyes, it was attaining a hitherto unparalleled prosperity, that the state, together with its royal house, was hastening toward those judgments which the prophets Amos and Hosea were raised up under Jeroboam II. to proclaim. First, it was the shepherd of Tekoa who came from Judah and testified to the tyrannical nobles of Samaria, revelling in proud security, and to the multitude trusting in their mistaken and hypocritical piety, the approach of the day of the Lord (Amos 5:10 sqq., 6:1-6). Afterward, probably toward the end of Jeroboam the Second's reign, Hosea appeared; and when the respite granted by the prophetic word (2 K. 10:30) to the house of Jehu had nearly expired, he announced first to the latter, and then to the kingdom of Samaria in general, that judgment was now at hand, and continued his testimony during the terrible times beginning with Jeroboam's death. O.

The *Jehu type of character* has always been familiar in Church and State. Such a man may be zealous, even violent, for special reforms which somewhere touch personal interests or stir personal feelings. But in no wise is he better than others in reference to the daily stringent demands of a pure and an unselfish life. Not that his zeal is altogether hypocritical, although it may employ sharp devices. It

may be genuine and right enough as far as it goes ; but its rightness is only partial, and its reach is limited. It does not cover the actual needs of the spirit's daily life. As a general result, such a reformer falls back out of sight when the issue has been reached. And when the dust raised by his apparent zeal is stilled, all can see and rightly estimate his selfish motive. So the ultimate effect of his acting is to add another to the many living examples that spur selfish men to self-seeking. B.— His sin was the sin of Jeroboam ; he made Israel to sin for his own advantage. It is the sin of the present day, the debasing of the ideal from motives of policy. It is the sin which every one commits, who says that it is *not practical* to conduct business or order conduct on high religious principles. *Houghton.*

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## Section 25.

REIGNS OF JEHOAHAZ, 17 YEARS, AND JEHOASH, 16 YEARS.

**23d of Joash to 15th of Amaziah, of Judah.**

2 KINGS 18 : 1-25.

1 In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz the  
 2 son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* seventeen years. And he did  
 that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of  
 3 Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin ; he departed not therefrom. And the anger of the  
 LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria,  
 4 and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, continually. And Jehoahaz besought the  
 LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him : for he saw the oppression of Israel, how that the  
 5 king of Syria oppressed them. (And the LORD gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out  
 from under the hand of the Syrians : and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as before-  
 6 time. Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, wherewith he  
 made Israel to sin, but walked therein : and there remained the Asherah also in Samaria.)  
 7 For he left not to Jehoahaz of the people save fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thou-  
 sand footmen ; for the king of Syria destroyed them, and made them like the dust in thresh-  
 8 ing. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, are they not  
 9 written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And Jehoahaz slept with his  
 fathers ; and they buried him in Samaria : and Joash his son reigned in his stead.  
 10 In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz  
 11 to reign over Israel in Samaria, *and reigned* sixteen years. And he did that which was evil  
 in the sight of the LORD ; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat,  
 wherewith he made Israel to sin : but he walked therein.

*Verses 12 and 13 transferred below, following verse 25.*

14 Now Elisha has fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died : and Joash the king of Israel  
 came down unto him, and wept over him, and said, My father, my father, the chariots of  
 15 Israel and the horsemen thereof ! And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows : and he  
 16 took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the  
 17 bow : and he put his hand *upon it*. And Elisha laid his hands upon the king's hands. And  
 he said, Open the window eastward : and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot : and he  
 shot. And he said, The LORD's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria : for  
 18 thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them. And he said, Take  
 the arrows : and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground :  
 19 and he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou  
 shouldst have smitten five or six times ; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst con-  
 sumed it : where as now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.

- 20 And Elisha died, and they buried him. Now the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at 21 the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.
- 22, 23 And Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. But the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them 24 from his presence as yet. And Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in 25 his stead. And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash smite him, and recovered the cities of Israel.
- 12 Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the 13 kings of Israel? And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

OF the other kings in Jehu's dynasty only brief notices appear. His son Jehoahaz reigned seventeen years; had wars with Syria, for a while disastrous, destructive; but subsequently, when he besought the Lord for help, he found deliverance and peace (verses 3-5, 22, 23). It fell to his son Joash to stand and weep over the aged prophet Elisha in his last sickness, and to give utterance to his emotions in words borrowed from Elisha's own lips as he saw Elijah ascend: "O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." The dying prophet aroused himself sufficiently to give the king some prophetic announcements bearing on the then pending issues of his wars with Syria, in which the measure of the king's success turned upon the reach and compass of his faith. At this point the historian records that the bones of Elisha imparted life to a dead body thrown in hastily upon them (verse 20)—so wonderfully was the miraculous element blended with his whole life, extending even to his decaying bones. The demand for miracles, *resulting from the great decline of faith*, especially in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, is a point worthy of special notice. The ministry of prophets, and particularly of the miracle-working prophets, Elijah and Elisha, was the chief agency employed of God to resist and eradicate Baal-worship from the land and to bring the people back to a living faith in Israel's God. Other prophets in considerable number had important work to do in this special field; but miraculous agency seems to have been chiefly limited to these two men.

Two prophets whose writings have come down to us, Hosea and Amos, fall within the long reign (forty-one years) of Jeroboam II., son and successor of this Joash. Their writings show how solemnly they expostulated with and how earnestly they rebuked both the people

and their king for their sins; how tenderly they entreated them to turn to their compassionate Father to find mercy; and yet with how little avail. If these written exhortations fairly represent the oral preaching of the prophets in Israel, it must have been wonderfully pungent, searching, thrilling, and ought to have been full of moral power. H. C.—Never more clearly than in this period, during the dynasty of Jehu, does it appear how the prophet, as the messenger of God, combined the twofold function of preaching to his own and, in a sense, to every future generation, and of intimating the wider purposes of God in the future. There is not in the prophetic utterances recorded any one series of admonitions, warnings, or even denunciations which does not lead up to an announcement of the happy prophetic future promised. In this respect prophecy has the same fundamental characteristic as the Book of Psalms, in which, whatever the groundnote, every hymn passes into the melody of thanksgiving and praise. This similarity is due to the fact that, in their scriptural aspect, the progress of outward teaching and the experience of the inner life are ever in accordance. On the other hand, there is not in the prophetic writings any utterance in regard to the future which has not its root, and, in a sense, its starting point in the history of the time. The prophet, so to speak, translates the vernacular of the present into the Divine language of the future, and he interprets the Divine sayings concerning the future by the well-known language of the present. As between his teaching and his prediction, so between the history of the present and that of the future there is not a gap: they are one, because through both runs one unswerving purpose which gradually unfolds what from the first had been infolded. And so history and proph-

ecy also are one, because God is one. And so also, if we would rightly understand them, must we study not so much prophecies as isolated utterances, but as prophecy in its grand harmonious historical unity. A. E.

**1-9.** The biblical text seems here somewhat involved, in part from the mixture of remarks by the writer with the historical notices extracted from existing documents. The following appears its real order. The usual notice (verse 1) of the accession of Jehoahaz, and of the duration of his reign is followed by a general description of the character of that monarch (in verse 2): as doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and continuing the wrongful religious institutions of Jeroboam. Then we have in verse 3 a notice of the Divine punishment of these sins in the surrender of Israel to Hazael, king of Syria, and to Benhadad, his son and successor. The following verse (verse 4) marks the repentance and prayer of Jehoahaz, occasioned by these calamities, and God's gracious answer, although not in the immediate present (see verses 22-25). Verses 5 and 6 form a parenthesis. Possibly it may begin with verse 4. The reference to the wars of Benhadad in verse 3, which can only apply to the time of Jehoahaz, may be rather of a general character (see verses 22 and 25). In any case the continuous historical notices, or extracts, recommence with verse 7, which describes the depressed condition of the kingdom under Jehoahaz, while verses 8 and 9 record, in the usual form, the death of Jehoahaz and the accession of his son, Jehoash (or Joash). Thus, as already stated, verses 5 and 6, if not also verse 4, form an intercalated notice, telling on the one hand how God had heard the prayer of Jehoahaz by raising up "a saviour" to Israel (verse 5), and, on the other hand, how this gracious interposition did not really affect the spiritual state of Israel (verse 6). They not only continued in the sins of Jeroboam, but "there stood the Asherah also in Samaria." This parenthetic notice must be considered as of a general character: "the saviour" raised up being in the first place Jehoash (verse 25), and finally and fully Jeroboam II. (2 K. 14: 25-27). *Sayce.*

**3.** Now first were the anticipations of Elisha on his introduction to Hazael near Damascus fully realized; now first did all those evils which his prophetic soul had presaged come on the unhappy Israelites. Invasions of their land fell upon them year by year, accompanied with all the horrors of the most savage and cruel warfare. G. R.

**4.** A prayer wrung from the king, not by the sense of his sin, but by the intolerable pressure of affliction, might have been thought undeserving of an answer. But the Lord is very pitiful, and welcomes the faintest approach of the sinner unto Him. He does not thrust the suppliant away, but seeks, by giving him tokens of His grace, to ripen his imperfect desires into real repentance. Accordingly, Jehoahaz met with a gracious response. God promised a saviour to the land, and ultimately raised one up in the person of Joash, who, but for his want of perseverance, would have completely delivered the nation from the Syrians. The work which he left undone was finished by his son, Jeroboam II. Thus God shows Himself ready to hear the cries even of the worst of men. None need despair in calling on Heaven when Jehoahaz was listened to in such dire straits. J. O.

Assuredly no better evidence could be afforded us that even in our furthest decline we may still turn to God, nor yet that prayer—even by Jehoahaz, and in that state of Israel—shall not remain unanswered. Yet, though the prayer was immediately heard, as in the judgment pronounced upon Ahab (1 K. 21: 27-29), its immediate manifestation was delayed. These are precious practical lessons to all time, and the more valuable that they are in such entire accordance with God's dealings as declared in other parts of Revelation, exhibiting the harmony and inward unity of Holy Scripture. *Sayce.*

As soon as any relenting is shown, as soon as the king acknowledges God's hand in His punishment, and turns to Him and entreats His aid, even although he does not put a stop to the practices by which God's anger has been provoked (verse 6), yet the Divine compassion is stirred. "The Lord hearkened unto him" (verse 4). A saviour is given, in the Divine counsels, if not at once in fact. The nation's fall is arrested, its life prolonged. *Hammond.*—O faithful Christian, if God heard Jehoahaz, how much more will He hear thee, if thou callest upon Him! The Lord gave Israel a deliverer, but Jehoahaz did not live to see him. God hears the cry of those who earnestly call upon Him, and helps them; but the time, and place, and manner of His aid are retained in His own discretion. Do not despair if thy prayer does not seem to be heard, and the Lord delays His assistance. He knows that fitting season as well as He knows what is useful to us. *Starke.*

**6.** There remained the grove. One



would have thought that, in such a reformation as that of Jehu, there would have been a clean sweep, or, at any rate, that Ahab's pet idolatries would have gone. But no! evil is terribly persistent. No reformation ever sweeps away at once all that it was intended to sweep away. "The grove remains." How many heathen superstitions survived the supersession of heathenism by Christianity! How many iniquitous laws continue in all countries after every attempt that is made to reform the laws! The result is partly through the fault of the reformers, who cease their efforts while much still remains to be done; but it is also caused in part by the tenacity of life which the things that need to be swept away possess in themselves. And as evil is thus persistent in communities, so is it also in the character of individuals. A man makes a great effort at self-reformation, changes his rules of conduct, his habits, the whole method of his life, as he thinks; but in some corner there still lurks a remnant of the old leaven, which shortly reasserts itself, and too often leavens the whole mass with its corrupting influence. The lesson to be learned is watchfulness and perseverance. By care, by consideration, and by constant effort, the persistency of evil may be met and counteracted. God's Holy Spirit is always ready to assist our endeavors; and whether in a community or in an individual, continued effort, divinely aided, will prevail at last.

7. The meaning seems to be that Hazael limited the standing army of Jehoahaz to fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen, not that he slew the entire military population except this small remnant. The policy of limiting the forces to be maintained by a subject-king was one known to the Romans, and has often been adopted in the East. It is still a part of our own policy in the government of India. The limitation left the country at the mercy of all its neighbors. *Hammond.*

Jehoahaz reigned seventeen years (incomplete), from the twenty-first year of Joash, king of Judah, to his thirty-seventh year (verse 10). He left his crown to his son, Jehoash, or Joash, to whom he had given the same name as that borne by the contemporary Jewish sovereign. This act would seem to imply that the friendly relations which had subsisted between the two kingdoms during the rule of the house of Omri were for a time resumed. But old jealousies were allowed to prevail; and the opportunity for alliance being suffered to slip, it was not long ere the ancient hostility once more showed itself (2 K. 14: 8-14), and came to such

a head, that henceforth the two sister nations continued estranged during the remainder of their joint existence. G. R.

#### REIGN OF JOASH, 16 YEARS.

##### *Verses 10-25.*

The writer passes from the reign of Jehoahaz, Jehu's son, to that of Joash, Jehu's grandson, which he seems to have intended at first to despatch in the short space of four verses (verses 10-13). He afterward, however, saw reason to add to his narrative, first, an account of an interview between Joash and Elisha, shortly before the death of the latter (verses 14-19); secondly, an account of a miracle wrought soon afterward by means of Elisha's corpse (verses 20, 21); and thirdly, a brief notice of Joash's Syrian war (verses 22-25). *Hammond.*

Jehoash (or Joash), the twelfth king of Israel, and the third of the line of Jehu, began to reign, in conjunction with his father Jehoahaz in the thirty-seventh year of Joash, king of Judah (B.C. 841), and alone two years later (B.C. 839); his entire reign lasted sixteen years. There is an apparent discrepancy between his character and his actions. It would seem as if the calf-worship of Jeroboam had become so inveterate in Israel that a king who practised it might yet be chosen as a deliverer from foreign oppression if he did not serve Baal; or it may be that God willed to give Israel a final opportunity of restoration, irrespective of the character of the king, "and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence *as yet*" (verse 23). We find Jehoash received with favor when he visited Elisha upon his death-bed, and he mourned over him in his own words when he lost Elijah, "O my father! my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" The prophet assured him of victory over the Syrians by significant actions. He bade him shoot an arrow from the open window toward Syria, and himself laid his hands with the king's upon the bow, as if to give Divine power to the shot, which he called "the arrow of Jehovah's deliverance from the Syrians," who were to be smitten in Aphek. Then he bade the king strike the ground with the arrows. The three strokes signified three victories; and the prophet was angry with the king for not striking five or six times, as he would then have consumed them utterly. The whole was a parable of the co-operation of human effort with the Divine counsels. It was fulfilled by three great victories which Jehoash gained over

Benhadad III., the son Hazael, and by which he recovered the cities which Hazael had taken from his father. Meanwhile, Elisha died, and a last miracle was wrought by his remains. A man was about to be buried in the same rock in which the prophet's sepulchre was hewn, when the bearers were alarmed by the approach of one of the predatory bands of Moabites that now infested Israel. They thrust the body hastily into the first open tomb in the face of the rock. It was that of Elisha, and upon touching his remains, the dead man came to life and stood upon his feet. All these events happened in the early years of Jehoash. The other great event of his reign was the conquest of Jerusalem which is related under the reign of Amaziah, king of Judah. He died, was buried in the royal sepulchre at Samaria, and was succeeded by his son Jeroboam II., the greatest king of Israel. P. 8.

**10. In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah.** Three years before his death, since he reigned forty years (chap. 12:1). The two Joashes were thus contemporary monarchs for the space of three years. *Hammond.*

**12, 13.** It is difficult to account for the occurrence of these verses in this place. They recur, with little variation, in the next chapter (verses 15 and 16). Keil rightly notes that they are here too early, since the whole remainder of the chapter is devoted to the acts of the king whose reign they bring, as it were, to a close; while in the next chapter they are altogether out of place, since they needlessly interrupt the history of the Jewish monarchs. According to ordinary laws of historical composition, they should form the closing paragraph of the present chapter. B. C.—Hence they are transferred to the close in the above text. B.

**14-19.** Jehu reigned twenty-eight years, his son Jehoahaz seventeen years, and his grandson Joash sixteen years. Because these three kings "departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin," during their three reigns the Lord delivered Israel "unto the hand of Hazael, king of Syria, and of Benhadad," his son. Many times through that long period had God heard the intercession and employed the agency of Elisha in behalf of a people, whom He seemingly "could not give up." Once more, upon the prophet's dying bed, He heeds his last intercession for the guilty nation, and by Elisha's act and word gives another pledge of "deliverance from Syria."

**14. Joash weeps over the dying Elisha.** In spirit resembling the disciple whom Jesus

loved, like John, Elisha lived to a great age. Like him, too, his ministry for the greater part of sixty years was a quietly leavening influence. Upon the court and people he had exerted a helpful and blessed force, year by year. Beside his direct interposition for their deliverance from siege and assault, to all these kings he had been as a living conscience, preventing their utter lapse into defiant rejection of God. Now and then they had even been moved to beseech the Lord (verse 4). By steadfast, wise supervision of evangelists, sent forth from the schools of the prophets, and by his own personal teaching, he had aided the people. Thus the knowledge of God had been more widely diffused, and the faith of true worshippers of Jehovah had been strengthened, confirmed and made more fruitful. It was not strange then that the king, who knew what Elisha had been to Israel for three-score years, should come down from his palace to the prophet's abode to express his grief, and to seek the last counsel from the man of God. If there was selfishness in his lament there was sincerity in his respect and veneration. With an intense feeling and truth he repeated the affectionate eulogy of Elisha over Elijah's departure. Elisha left no successor to whom he could go for help in his need. No other had been entrusted with the power of miracle. No other had such prevalent might in intercession with God. To whom, then, could Joash look when Elisha is taken from Israel? "Thou, the defence of Israel, art to take thy heavenward flight!" B.

**Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died.** Elisha, who was grown to manhood before the death of Ahab (1 K. 19:19), must have been at least eighty years old at the accession of Joash. **And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him.** The visit of a king to a prophet, in the way of sympathy and compliment, would be a very unusual occurrence at any period of the world's history. The act of Joash certainly implies a degree of tenderness and consideration on his part very uncommon at the time, and is a fact to which much weight should be attached in any estimate that we form of his character. *Hammond.*

**The chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.** It is impossible to imagine that Joash now by a mere coincidence spoke the exact words at the deathbed of Elisha, which Elisha himself had spoken when he was about to lose Elijah. He must have known the circumstances of Elijah's removal, which were perhaps already entered in the

"book of the Chronicles of the kings of Israel;" and he must have intended to apply to Elisha his own words on that solemn occasion. "Alas!" he probably meant to say, "thou too art about to leave us, and to follow Elijah—thou who hast been since his departure that which he was while he remained on earth, the true defence of Israel." B. C.

**15-19.** *Elisha's last ministry, a pledge of God's deliverance.* To the very last Elisha's heart, like Elijah's, beat fervently for the honor of God and the welfare of his people. His last word shall be an encouragement. Partly by symbolical action he declares that God will give Joash victory over the Syrians. By bidding the king "take bow and arrows, to put his hand upon the bow," and afterward to shoot, Elisha intimates that God will still work for Israel, and through Joash himself, if only he be obedient and determined. The Syrians were now masters of the country east of Jordan. Therefore the course of the arrow is through a window opening eastward. Through Elisha's hands upon the king's, the act of the king derives its authority from Elisha's God. The promise of success and deliverance is His. And it is explicit: "Thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them."

Joash desired the fulfilment of God's promise; but he lacked that concentrated earnestness of faith and energy of will which still burned in the soul of Elisha. The sharpness and decision of the prophet's whole symbolic action ought to have roused an intensely eager purpose. But instead of this, when he is bidden to hit the ground with the remaining arrows, although knowing that *this sign also meant conflicts and victories*, he smites but thrice. A half faith and a half will is all that he can give back to the old prophet's fiery enthusiasm for God and for God's people. What wonder Elisha is vexed with his half-heartedness, and reproves his slack hand! Then Joash fully learns what faith and determination have to do with success. Had he shot *all* the arrows, he had smitten Syria in her strongholds, till Syria's power was finally broken. Now he shall smite only the army of Syria within the bounds of Israel. This he subsequently did. "Three times did Joash beat Benhadad, the son of Hazael, and recovered the cities of Israel" (verse 25). But Syria remained as a scourge to Israel. B.

**16. Put his hands upon the king's hands.** So that the shooting should be, or at least appear to be, the joint act of himself and the king. The intention was, no doubt, as Keil

says, "to show that the power which was to be given to the bow-shot" was not the king's own power, but "came from the Lord through the mediation of His prophet." *Hammond.*

**17.** The action declares: 1. That deliverance in trouble is from God only. As He alone can give it, so He is the true Source from which to seek it. 2. God employs human agency in His deliverances. The bow and arrows were the symbols of the human instrumentality. Joash had to put his hands upon the bow. It was he who shot the arrow. It was he who was to smite the Syrians. Man has his part given him in all God's works of deliverance on earth. 3. The human agent could only succeed as God strengthened him. Elisha put his hands upon Joash's, signifying that the power to gain the predicted victories came from God. J. O.

**18. And stayed.** Joash struck with the arrows against the floor three times and then paused, thinking he had done enough. He did not enter into the spirit of the symbolical act, which represented the smiting and slaying of enemies. Perhaps he had not much faith in the virtue of the symbolism.

**19.** Elisha was angered at the lukewarmness of Joash, and his lack of faith and zeal. He himself, from his higher standpoint, saw the greatness of the opportunity, the abundance of favor which God was ready to grant, and the way in which God's favor was stunted and narrowed by Joash's want of receptiveness. Had the king been equal to the occasion, a full end might at once have been made of Syria, and Israel might have been enabled to brace herself for the still more perilous struggle with Assyria, in which she ultimately succumbed. If he had been earnestly desirous of victory, and had had faith in the symbolical action as divinely directed, he would have kept on smiting till the prophet told him it was enough. *Hammond.*—The unfaithfulness of man limits the goodness of God. Our Lord "could do no mighty work" in one city, "because of their unbelief" (Mark 6: 5, 6). God had been willing now to give the Israelites complete victory over Syria—victory "even to consuming" (verse 17); but Joash by his non-acceptance of the Divine promise in its fulness had checked the outflow of mercy; and the result was that the original promise could not be fulfilled. B. C.

We learn: 1. Very trivial actions often reveal a great deal of character. 2. We often have not from God because we ask not. These shootings of the arrows were at once prayers for victories from God and pledges of victories.

Joash, as it were, asked for only three victories, and he only got three. Had he asked for more, he would have got more. Had Abraham not ceased pleading for Sodom when he did, he might have got a yet further extension of grace for that doomed city. It is never in God we are straitened in our prayers; it is only in ourselves. 3. It displeases God that we do not ask more from Him. His controversy with us is not that we ask too much, but that we do not ask enough. Joash missed the full blessing by stopping in his asking. J. O.

Be reminded from the story of one great fact of the kingdom of heaven, a fact on which the holy Master constantly spoke, saying, "According to thy faith be it unto thee"—the fact that according to the measure of our trust will be the measure of our blessing. There was a blessing for Joash from the dying prophet—just as there is a blessing for you and for me from the living Prophet—if he could put his trust in him. Unless he could put his trust in him, the thing signified would not accompany the sign. "And Joash smote thrice." That was the measure of the man's confidence in the promise of God, and so it was the measure of the fulfilment of the promise too. And this has been the Lord God's way in dealing with mankind. He that looks for great things from the hand of God—for great peace, for great nearness to the mercy seat, for great victory over self—he, through the merit of Christ, and he alone, shall do great things; but he who asks with an irresolute desire and a wavering heart, "let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord." Christ's mercy, as one well says, like water in a vase, takes the shape of the vessel that holds it. On the one side the grace is infinite: it is given to every man according to the measure of the gift of Christ, with no limit but His unlimited fulness. On the other hand, the amount which we practically receive from the store is at each successive moment determined by the measure, and the purity, and the intensity of our faith. On Christ's side there is no limit but infinity; on our side there is no limit but capacity, and the capacity of each one of us is settled by our better desires. The word to us is, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." "According to thy faith be it done unto thee." *Anon.*

We pray for nothing less than Christ's great glory, and it is possible to ask too little. We have prayed and have received; but have we prayed or received in any measure corresponding to the exceeding great and precious prom-

ises of Him with whom we have to do? the merits and sufferings of Him whose death and righteousness are our plea? or the boundless compassion of Him who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not? We are not straitened in God; but we are straitened in our desires, our purposes, our believings. Here all is narrow; there—in the heart of God—all is wide. We have not, because we ask not. J. W. A.

**20, 21.** *Elisha's death and burial, and the after-miracle.* As Elisha had lived among the people, so he died among them. King and nobles and people took part in his public and honorable burial. God so ordered it that the influence of his stainless character and the teaching of his helpful, ministering life, might be thus recalled and freshly impressed. Two generations had he faithfully served in his sixty years of ministry for God. And in all his history we read no word of reproach nor hint of defection, from the mouth of God. Enoch-like he walked with God, yet he was not translated. For God would add to the witness of even so prolonged a life the testimony of a tranquil and triumphant death. No more completely-rounded life, none more human and more exemplary, do we read in the Inspired Records. And after death and burial, even in his sepulchred body, God honored this faithful servant as He never honored any beside. Briefly as the incident is narrated, the purpose of the record is clear; and its suggestions are grand and impressive. Within a year the land was invaded by raiding parties from Moab, on the east of Jordan. One of these bands was seen in the distance by a small funeral train bearing a dead man to the grave. They chanced to be passing the hill-side tomb of Elisha. Hurriedly they bore the body into the tomb and laid it down in contact with that of the prophet. Instantly the dead man came to life and rose to his feet. That life should come to the dead from the dead was a marvel never heard of before, a work clearly wrought by the direct power of God. And such a miracle had a worthy purpose. It manifestly conveyed a posthumous testimony to the Divine mission and life-work of the departed prophet. By it God authenticated Elisha's teachings afresh, as by a voice from heaven; and intimated that He would have them remembered and heeded by His people. By it, too, He substantiated and sealed Elisha's prophetic promises and warnings, with a sanction so solemn seeking to give them vividness and persuasive force over the hearts of king and people. Further, while distinctly hinting the fact

of a future resurrection of the body, this miracle vividly suggested the reality of another life in which God was still the God of the living Elisha. So God would encourage the hopes of believing Israelites by the glimpse of a rest remaining for His people; that they might "endure as seeing Him who is invisible," who would finally reward their fidelity in a future immortal life. And upon the heedless, unbelieving multitude the same stupendous reality was solemnly impressed, that they, too, might be led to due care and preparation for its experience. For these immediate effects upon the living generation, and to convey these suggestions of a bodily resurrection and a future life to all generations, God added this miracle of life from Elisha's lifeless body to His previous testimonies in the translation of Enoch and Elijah. B.

**20. And Elisha died.** The longest and most useful life thus comes to its close. It is well when, on a death-bed, one can look back on a life which has been spent in the service of God. The certainty of removal by death from the scene of their labors should animate those who are still in the vigor of their powers to work while it is to-day, and should lead those who enjoy the presence and services of good men to prize and honor these servants of God while they are here. From the side of the saint himself death is not a calamity, but a gain. "He rests from his labors, and his works follow him." J. O.

**21. He revived and stood up on his feet.** To make a dead corpse the source out of which vitality shall leap forth to fresh energy is to surpass all that the most lively fancy could imagine of wonderful, and almost to reconcile contradictions. God willed at this time to show that He could effect even this marvellous thing—make death give life to that which was recently dead—educer from one dead in Him the vital power that should resuscitate and reanimate another also dead, and make a tomb—the place of death—the scene of the transformation! *Hammond.*

This miracle was the immediate work of God, and concurred with the translation of Elijah, to keep alive and confirm, in a degenerate and infidel age, the grand truth of a bodily resurrection, which the translation of Enoch was calculated to produce in the antediluvian world, and which the resurrection of Christ, in a glorified body, fully illustrated. *Hales.*—This great miracle, though very briefly related, was a decided proof of his mission, and a confirmation of all his prophecies. It was also a plain indi-

cation of another life after this; when Elisha died, there was not an end of him, for then he could not have done this. From operation we may infer existence. By this it appeared that the Lord was still the God of Elisha, therefore Elisha still lived, for *he is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* Elijah was honored in his departure, Elisha was honored *after* his departure. God thus dispenses honors as He pleases, but, one way or other, the rest of all the saints will be glorious (Isa. 11:10). H.—God set the seal on his prophetic work by making life-giving power to issue even from his grave. The miracle suggests to us the fact that from every good man's grave there issues in an important sense a life-giving power. The influence of men does not die with them. On the contrary, it is often greater after their deaths than during their lives. J. O.

The good man's influence lives after his body dies. The illustration of this truth, with such emphasis as even so sensuous a people could not resist, seems to have been one chief object of the miracle. The truths he had taught them and the spirit he had manifested would have more permanent effect because of such demonstration of God's interest even in his dust. His influence would have quickening power, as his bones had power to bring to life the man who "revived and stood upon his feet" as soon as he touched these entombed relics of the prophet. Our posthumous influence does not receive enough of our thought. A man may be forgotten, his name may be unknown, and strangers may tread upon his grave or disturb his ashes to make room for their own dead, but the works he made in life will be seen and the power he possessed will be felt by those who follow him. *J. Ellis.*—This narrative teaches us that the influence of faithful workers for the kingdom of God extends beyond the grave, and that frequently a cause for which men have labored and spent themselves is advanced by the departure from among us of those who have taken it in hand. Contact with the death of such a worker not unfrequently imparts life—the life of earnestness, the life of devotion, the life of Christian self-sacrifice—to those who did not possess it, or who possessed it only imperfectly and inefficiently before. *G. Calthrop.*

**22.** The author, having parenthetically related the extraordinary miracle wrought by the instrumentality of Elisha's corpse, returns to the subject of the Syrian oppression. He had, in verses 14–19, dwelt upon the promises of victory given by the prophet to Joash. He is now bent on relating their fulfilment. But be-

fore doing so he recapitulates. Verse 22 refers back to verse 3, and verse 23 to verses 4 and 5.

**23. And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them.** Even in His wrath God "thinketh upon mercy." While He was still punishing Israel by the sword of Hazeal, he was yet careful not to make a full end, not to allow the affliction to proceed too far. He still preserved the nation, and kept it in being. *Hammond.*

**Because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.** That covenant was the main fact in the history of Israel. It underlies and governs all God's dealings with them, past, present, and prospective. It was the remembrance of this covenant which led to the deliverance from Egypt; to the settlement in Caanan; and to God's patient dealings with the nation amid their various rebellions, and under their constant provocations. God saved them, not for their righteousness' sake, but for His own Name's sake. He is the God of unchanging faithfulness. He bears long with men, if haply they will repent. Wherefore it is said, "He would not destroy them, neither cast He them from His presence as yet." There is a limit, however, to Divine forbearance. The time came when, still remaining impenitent, they were cast away, though even then not forever. J. O.

**23-25.** At its close the narrative again returns to what is its key-note (in verses 4, 5). Again comes the record of the Lord's compassion, of His faithful remembrance of the covenant with the Fathers, and of His merciful delay of that final punishment of Israel's sin which would sweep them far from their land. It was as God had promised. Hazeal was dead. Once and again—nay, three times—did Jehoash defeat Benhadad (III.), the son and successor of Hazeal, and take from him those cities which had been captured in the reign of Jehoahaz. But as from the rock-hewn sepulchre of Elisha came attestation of his Divine mission, so comes there to us from the monuments of Assyria confirmation of this defeat of Benhadad in fulfilment of Divine promise. For whereas his father is repeatedly referred to as a bold warrior even against the overwhelming might of Assyria, Benhadad (III.) is not even mentioned. This is most significant; evidently his reign was smitten with weakness, and his power had been wholly broken. A. E.

*Victory of Joash over Amaziah.*

**12. Fought against Amaziah.** Amaziah, king of Judah, had defeated the Edomites

with great slaughter, and returned victorious with a large booty (2 Chron. 25 : 9) to Jerusalem. Then, in the insolence of victory, the Jewish king sent a challenge to his Israelite brother, in the curt but perfectly clear phrase—"Come, let us look one another in the face." Joash answered the challenger in true Oriental fashion, with a parable: "The thistle that was in Lebanon," he said, "sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there came by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle" (2 K. 14 : 9). To his parable he added a few words of advice: "Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory of this, and tarry at home: for why shouldest thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?" But Amaziah had gone too far to draw back. Instead of "tarrying at home," he marched out to attack his foe, and met him at Bethshemesh, not far from Jerusalem, where the two kings "looked one another in the face," and fought a bloody battle. The host of Judah was discomfited before Israel, and fled away in confusion; Amaziah himself being taken prisoner upon the battlefield. Joash forthwith advanced upon Jerusalem, which, being quite unable to resist the conqueror, had to submit upon disgraceful conditions. A space of four hundred cubits (two hundred yards) in the northern wall was levelled (2 K. 14 : 13). All the treasures contained in the Temple and in the royal palace, whether in the shape of bullion or of vessels, were considered to be forfeited, and were seized and carried off (*ibid.*, verse 14). Hostages also were demanded and given—a new feature in the warfare of the time; after which Joash, having released Amaziah and restored him to his throne, returned in triumph, with his victorious army, to Samaria.

It would seem that Joash did not very long survive his great victory. His entire reign lasted only sixteen years, and the earlier part of it must have been occupied with the Syrian war. Amaziah did not, probably, ascend the Jewish throne till Joash's fourth year, and then must have been for some considerable time engaged in his preparations against Edom (2 Chron. 25 : 5-11). The Edomite campaign can scarcely have been fought earlier than his tenth or eleventh year, which was Joash's thirteenth or fourteenth. Even if the battle of Bethshemesh took place in the year following, Joash can have survived it only for a year or two. He appears to have died peacefully in Sama-

ria, and to have been buried there in the sepulchres of the kings. (See reign of Amaziah, Section 36.) G. R.

*Other Distinctive Practical Teachings.*

1. The measure of success in Christian conflict or work depends upon the measure of faith, of earnestness and perseverance. Feebleness of faith, fitfulness and inconstancy in action hinder effectiveness in warfare, and fruitfulness in achievement. Therefore obediently, with all the soul's energy, and tirelessly, must Christ's soldier and toiler struggle and endure to the end, as seeing Him who is invisible.

2. The time and circumstances of death are varied in God's wise appointment. Sometimes He allots a briefer term of service, or summons with a sudden call. So He dealt with Elijah. To others, as to Elisha, He ordains a protracted period of usefulness, and a gradual approach to death. Each experience has its advantages, and God metes these out to every believer in His unerring wisdom and unfailing love. But His is the ordering, and of each life and of its close He makes the most and the best.

3. To all believers, especially to those who are charged with ministry in the Church of God, the example of Elisha is full of incitement

to single-hearted fidelity. Such fidelity makes every believer's life, like Elisha's, a blessing to his community and nation. And such a life of blessing never dies out of the hearts that have been blessed. Through these hearts the blessing influence is transmitted to succeeding generations, and thus the believer "being dead yet speaketh," even unto the end of time. B.

In the Old Testament, we may study both God and man by an "inductive method." We may learn what God is, and what He will do for and with men, by seeing what He was, and what He did, in the days of patriarchs and prophets. We may discover what fate will attend the various forms of human conduct, by seeing to what they led in that olden time. We may know what are the possibilities of human endeavor, and what men, by the grace of God, may do and be, by learning what the ancient men of God, of whom the world was not worthy, became and achieved. We may discover what are the elements and the fashioning powers of a noble and godly life by studying the development and the character of the grand and saintly souls of the Old Testament age. *S. Burnham.*

## Section 26.

REIGN OF JEROBOAM II., 41 YEARS.

**15th of Amaziah to 14th of Uzziah, of Judah.**

2 KINGS 14 : 23-29.

23 IN the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah Jeroboam the son of  
24 Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. And he did  
that which was evil in the sight of the LORD : he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam  
25 the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin. He restored the border of Israel from  
the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD,  
the God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the  
26 prophet, which was of Gath-hepher. For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was  
very bitter : for there was none shut up nor left at large, neither was there any helper for  
27 Israel. And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven :  
28 but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. Now the rest of the acts of  
Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered  
Damascus, and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the  
29 book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel ? And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even  
with the kings of Israel ; and Zechariah his son reigned in his stead.

THE long reign of Jeroboam II., the most important of those belonging to the kingdom of Israel since that of Ahab, is treated with great brevity by the writer, whose interest is far more in Judah than in Israel. Seven verses only are devoted to him. The result of his wars is given without any account of the wars themselves. And the great fact of his ruling over Damascus only comes in by a sort of afterthought (verse 28). The usual formulas are followed in introducing his reign and dismissing it. Jeroboam II. was contemporary with Amaziah during fourteen years of his reign. *Hammond.*

**23. Jeroboam.** The name is here remarkable. It is the only instance, in the history of either kingdom, of a recurrent royal appellation. We can scarcely doubt that Jeroboam II. was named after the great founder of the Israelite kingdom by a father who trusted that he might prove a sort of second founder. B. C.

Jeroboam II., the thirteenth king of Israel, and the fourth of the house of Jehu, succeeded his father Jehoash in the fifteenth year of Amaziah, and reigned forty-one years at Samaria. His reign is by far the most prosperous in the annals of Israel. To him even more than to his father is the statement applied that, in Israel's decline, God gave them a saviour, in remembrance of His covenant with their fathers; though he also followed the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. He not only recovered from Syria the whole district east of the Jordan from Hamath to the Dead Sea, and reconquered Ammon and Moab, but he attacked Damascus itself; and if he did not actually take the city, he regained a large part of its territory for Israel. The apparent ease of these conquests may be explained by the sufferings of Syria from the constant attacks of the great Assyrian Empire, now at the height of its power. P. S.

We are not able to lay down on any historical authority the order of Jeroboam's wars. But taking probability for our guide, we shall not be likely to stray very far from the truth if we put his war with Syria of Damascus first, that for the recovery of Hamath second, and that with Moab and Ammon in the far south third. Syria of Damascus still retained at Jeroboam's accession the whole territory east of the Jordan—"all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan" (2 K. 10 : 33), all the tract conquered by Hazael from Jehu. Joash had recovered only the cities taken by Benhadad, the son of

Hazael, from Jehoahaz (2 K. 13 : 25). It would be natural that Jeroboam should seek first to "recover his border." Rapid success seems to have attended him. Not only was the entire trans-Jordanic region recovered, but the Damascus kingdom was itself invaded; the troops of Jeroboam carried all before them; and the capital city, the great and ancient "Damme sek," was taken (*ibid.*, verse 28). When we consider the great power of Damascus, how, under Benhadad and Hazael, it had warred on tolerably even terms against Assyria, what a strength of chariots it possessed, and how nearly it had but a little while previously conquered the kingdom of Israel (2 K. 13 : 7), the change of fortune does indeed seem remarkable, and the success of Jeroboam extraordinary. Then Jeroboam "recovered Hamath to Israel" (verse 28) after it had enjoyed independence for the space of a hundred and fifty years, regaining thereby the sovereignty over which it had been lost upon the death of Solomon. Thus victorious in the northeast and the north, Jeroboam seems to have turned his arms against the south. He did not indeed attack Judah, which was growing in strength under the judicious rule of Uzziah, the son of Amaziah, but in re-establishing his southeastern border he could not fail to come in contact with the Ammonites and Moabites, and there is reason to believe that he severely chastised both nations, and even conquered them, or at any rate made their kings tributary.

How long it took Jeroboam to effect his numerous and important conquests is uncertain. He had a reign of very unusual length, extending over a space of forty-one years. There is reason, however, to believe that his great victories and successes belong to the earlier rather than to the later portion of his reign, and that after they were completed the people of Israel enjoyed under Jeroboam's rule a long term of continually increasing material prosperity.

The prosperity exhibited itself in magnificent buildings of various kinds, in a vast number of the most luxurious contrivances for material enjoyment, and in a general expensiveness and softness of living among the upper classes which tended, as time went on, to injure the morals and sap the physical vigor of the nation. "Great houses" were built, "palaces," as they are called in some places (Amos 3 : 11 ; 6 : 8), of hewn stone (*ibid.*, 5 : 11), and liberally adorned with ivory (*ibid.*, 3 : 15); some were used as winter, others as summer residences (*ibid.*); they were richly and luxuriously fitted up



with ivory beds (*ibid.*, 6 : 4), and soft couches draped with Damascus cloth (*ibid.*, 8 : 12); the harp and the viol resounded in them (*ibid.*, 6 : 5); and their owners indulged in a continuous round of feasting and revelry. As Ewald says: "The comfortable prosperity of the people passed, in the metropolis of Samaria and in many other parts of the country, into debauchery and excess, and then again into such pampered effeminacy of morals that the austere old Israel could hardly be recognized, and the prophets could not pour out their divine wrath, or the moralists their ridicule, abundantly enough. The clearest sign of the degradation of public morality was furnished then, as at all similar times, by the growing effrontery of women and the decline of domestic chastity (Hos. 4 : 13; Amos 2 : 7; 4 : 1-8; 8 : 13). Such a vehement appetite for debauchery and ostentation created an equally powerful tendency to avarice and all kinds of fraudulent oppression of the most defenceless citizens; and the opportunities for these perversions of justice increased in proportion as the king came to be regarded simply as the first among a number of similar potentates and military chiefs (Hos. 5 : 1; Amos 3 : 9, etc.). And now, too, as in the time of Solomon, the freer intercourse of the people with heathen nations, who had either been conquered or were distinguished by commerce and art, together with the general spread of looseness and intemperance of life, caused an extensive introduction of heathen religions. Thus the fair promise with which the reign of Jeroboam opened passed away, and was succeeded by a time of general corruption and depravity. The existing dynasty was declared to lie under the Divine displeasure, and was threatened with speedy extinction (Hos. 1 : 4; Amos 7 : 9). The kingdom itself was declared to be approaching its dissolution (Amos 3 : 12; 5 : 27; 7 : 17). Assyria was not obscurely indicated as the world-power by which the destruction would be accomplished (Hos. 10 : 14). A sad and dismal prospect must have lain before the aged Jeroboam in the later years of his life, when, denounced by the prophets of Jehovah, and at war with one of them (Amos 7 : 12), he must have felt that his dynasty approached its term, and that even his kingdom's days were probably numbered. At the age of threescore years and ten, or more, he at length "slept with his fathers" (5 : 29), having reigned longer, and probably having lived longer, than any other king of Israel; having also done more than any other king to increase the glory and raise the military

*prestige* of his kingdom, but having greatly sapped its strength, and brought it into a condition which would naturally make it an easy prey to the first powerful enemy with which it should be brought into contact. G. R.

**23. Forty and one years.** Many moderns (Thenius, Bähr, and others) extend the term to fifty-one years. Some suppose that Jeroboam was joint king with his father in Amaziah's third year, sole king from his fifteenth.

**25. Jonah, the son of Amittai** (cf. Jonah 1 : 1). Jonah's date is determined by this passage. He was contemporary with Hosea and Amos, and earlier than Micah. His prophecy concerning Jeroboam is probably assigned to the early part of that king's reign.

**26. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter** (cf. chap. 13 : 4, 23). The repetition is perhaps to be accounted for by the desire of the writer to explain how it came to pass that so great a deliverance was granted to Israel under a king who maintained the worship of the calves. He views it as the consequence of God's infinite compassion, and of the extreme bitterness of Israel's sufferings under the Syrians (cf. chap. 13 : 7 and Amos 1 : 3).

**27.** God's decision under the circumstances was not, as it well might have been, considering Israel's ill desert, to blot out forthwith the very name of Israel from the earth. On the contrary, He gave the nation a breathing-space, a gleam of light, a second summer before the winter set in—a further opportunity of repenting and turning to Him with all their hearts if they would only have taken advantage of it, a chance of redeeming the past and re-establishing themselves in His favor. He might well have destroyed them at this time if He had looked only to considerations of justice, if in His wrath He had not thought upon mercy. *Hammond.*—According to the promises of Deut. 32 : 36-43 (which are in the writer's mind), God "repented Himself for His servants," and was "merciful unto His land and to His people." He did not send a prophet to say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but on the contrary sent two to announce that they should be delivered from their present enemies, and obtain triumphs over them. **That he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven.** This is again a Mosiac phrase found only here and in Deut. 9 : 14; 29 : 20. B. C.—**By the hand of Jeroboam, the son of Joash.** Joash began the salva-

tion, but it was reserved for Jeroboam to complete it. He was the true "saviour" (chap. 13:5), the true accomplisher of the work, for which his father only paved the way. Thus one Jeroboam founded the kingdom; another refounded it, restored its ancient glories, and gave it its old dimensions. *Hammond.*

**29. Zechariah his son reigned in his stead.** By Zechariah's accession the promise given to Jehu (chap. 10:30), that his "children to the fourth generation should sit on the throne of Israel," was literally fulfilled. No other royal house occupied the Israelitish throne for more than three generations. *Hammond.*

With this period a new stage in prophecy begins. Hitherto the prophets had been chiefly God-sent teachers and messengers to their contemporaries—reproving, warning, guiding, encouraging. Henceforth the prophetic horizon enlarges. Beyond their contemporaries who were hardened beyond hope of recovery, their outlook is henceforth on the great hope of the Messianic kingdom. They have despaired of the present; but their thought is of the future. They have despaired of the kingdom of Israel and of Judah; but the Divine thought of preparation that underlay it comes increasingly into prominence and clearer vision. The promises of old acquire a new and deeper meaning; they assume shape and outlines which become ever more definite as the daylight grows. It is the future, with Israel's Messiah-King to rule a people restored and converted, and an endless, boundless kingdom of righteousness and peace which in its wide embrace includes, reconciles, and unites a ransomed world, obedient to the Lord, which is now the great burden of their message, and the joyous assured hope of their thoughts. For doomed apostate Israel after the flesh, we have Israel after the spirit, and on the ruins of the old rises the new: a Jerusalem, a temple, a kingdom, and a King fulfilling the ideal of which the earthly had been the type.

Without attempting any detailed account, the prophets of that period and the contents of their writings may here be briefly referred to. The earliest of them was probably Joel, "Jehovah is God"—a Judean whose sphere of labor was also in his native country. His "prophecy" consists of two utterances (1:2-2:18; 2:19-3:21), couched in language as pure and beautiful as the sentiments are elevated. From the allusions to contemporary events (3:4-8, 19), as well as from the absence

of any mention of Assyria, we infer that his ministry was in the time of Joash, king of Judah, and of the high-priest Jehoiada, with which agree his temple-references, which indicate a time of religious revival. But here also we mark the wider Messianic references in chapters 2 and 3. The prophecies of Joel seem already referred to by Amos, "the burden-bearer" (cf. Amos 1:2; 9:13 with Joel 3:16, 18, 20). Amos himself was also a Judean, originally a "herdman of Tekoa" (Amos 1:1; 7:14). But his ministry was in Israel, and during Jeroboam's reign, after the accession of Uzziah (Amos 1:1). There in Bethel, where the false worship of Israel was combined with the greatest luxury and dissipation, the prophet was confronted by Amaziah, its chief priest. Although apparently unsuccessful in his accusations of political conspiracy against the prophet, Amos was obliged to withdraw into Judah (Amos 7:10-13). Here he wrote down his prophetic utterances, prefacing them by an announcement of coming judgment (Amos 1, 2) through a nation, evidently that very Assyria on which the confidence of Jeroboam had rested (cf. Amos 5:27; 6:14). Yet, amid all his denunciations, Amos also looked forward to and prophesied of the glorious Messianic kingdom (Amos 9:11-15). A third prophet of that period was Hosea, "help"—the Jeremiah of the northern kingdom, as he has been aptly designated. From certain allusions in his book we infer that he had been a native of the northern kingdom (Hos. 1:3; 6:10; cf. 7:8). His ministry was probably toward the end of the reign of Jeroboam, and extended to the rising of Shallum and of Menahem (cf. Hos. 6:8; 7:7). His prophecies give special insight into the political relations and dangers of the northern kingdom, and into the utter corruption of all classes. Frequent, too, are his references to Judah. Yet here also we mark the persistence of the outlook on the better Davidic kingdom (Hos. 3), with much concerning it scattered throughout his prophecies. Lastly, as yet another prophet of that period, we refer to Jonah, the son of Amittai, a native of Gath-hepher, in the tribal possession of Zebulun, and therefore in the northern part of Israel. Without entering on the critical questions connected with the story which forms the burden of the Book of Jonah, a deep significance surely attaches to its association with the prophet contemporary of Jeroboam II. It is not only that it points to a preaching of repentance to the Gentiles also, and to their in-

gathering with believing Israel into the family of God, but the circumstances of the time give it a special meaning. From apostate, morally sunken Israel, such as we have learned to know it from the descriptions of the prophets, Jonah, the very messenger who had announced coming deliverance to Jeroboam, turns by Divine commission to the Gentiles, to that great world-empire which was representative of them. And from this comes to us a fresh and deeper meaning in regard to the application of this his-

tory by our Lord (Matt. 12 : 39-41 ; 16 : 4 ; Luke 11 : 29-32). It had been "a wicked and adulterous generation" of old that had heard the prophecy of Jonah, and understood not the sign ; nor was other sign to be given to it. So would it be to those who heard and saw the Christ, yet craved after other "sign" suited to their unbelief. None other than the sign of Jonah would be theirs, yet even this, "a sign" sufficient in itself, a sign also not only of judgment, but of wider mercy (Matt. 12 : 41). A. E.

## Section 27.

### REIGNS OF ZECHARIAH, SHALLUM, MENAHEM, AND PEKAHIAH.

*Reign of Zechariah, 38th Year of Uzziah, Six Months. Reign of Shallum, 39th Year of Uzziah, One Month. Reign of Menahem, 39th to 50th Year of Uzziah, Ten Years. Reign of Pekahiah, 50th and 51st Years of Uzziah, Two Years.*

2 KINGS 15 : 8-26.

- 8 In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zechariah the son of Jeroboam  
 9 reign over Israel in Samaria six months. And he did that which was evil in the sight of  
 the LORD, as his fathers had done : he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of  
 10 Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin. And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against  
 11 him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. Now the  
 rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the  
 12 kings of Israel. This was the word of the LORD which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy  
 sons to the fourth generation shall sit upon the throne of Israel. And so it came to pass.
- 13 Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of  
 14 Judah ; and he reigned the space of a month in Samaria. And Menahem the son of Gadi  
 went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in  
 15 Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. Now the rest of the acts of Shallum, and  
 his conspiracy which he made, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the  
 16 kings of Israel. Then Menahem smote Tiphshah, and all that were therein, and the borders  
 thereof, from Tirzah : because they opened not to him, therefore he smote it ; and all the  
 women therein that were with child he ripped up.
- 17 In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi  
 18 to reign over Israel, and reigned ten years in Samaria. And he did that which was evil in  
 the sight of the LORD : he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of  
 19 Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin. There came against the land Pul the king of  
 Assyria ; and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with  
 20 him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even  
 of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of  
 21 Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land. Now the  
 rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the  
 22 chronicles of the kings of Israel ? And Menahem slept with his fathers ; and Pekahiah his  
 son reigned in his stead.
- 23 In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to  
 24 reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years. And he did that which was evil in the  
 sight of the LORD : he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith

25 he made Israel to sin. And Pekah the son of Remaliah, his captain, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the castle of the king's house, with Argob and Arie; and with him were fifty men of the Gileadites: and he slew him, and reigned in his stead.

26 Now the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

JEROBOAM died, and was succeeded by his son Zechariah. This was the fourth generation of the house of Jehu, and it will be seen that he reigned only six months. From this time Israel went rapidly to its ruin. The height of prosperity reached in the reign of Jeroboam was but the last flicker of the light before final extinction. A little over thirty years after Jeroboam's death—forty at most—the words of the prophets were fulfilled, and the kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and its people carried away by the Assyrian. J. O.—In the thirteen or fourteen years between the death of Jeroboam II. and that of Uzziah, the northern kingdom saw no less than four kings, of whom each was removed by violence. In the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah, Jeroboam II. was succeeded by his son Zechariah, the fourth and last monarch of the line of Jehu. Holy Scripture here specially marks the fulfilment of Divine prediction (2 K. 10 : 30), in the continuance of this dynasty “unto the fourth generation.” Of his brief reign, which lasted only six months, we read that it was characterized by continuance in the sins of Jeroboam. A conspiracy by one Shallum, not otherwise known, issued, not in the private assassination but in the public murder of the king. So terribly had all bonds of society been loosened. The regicide occupied the throne for only one month. Menahem, whom Josephus describes as the general of Zechariah, advanced against Shallum from Tirzah, the ancient royal residence, and slew the usurper. The assumption of the crown by Menahem seems to have met some resistance. At any rate, we read of an expedition of Menahem against a place called Tiphshah (“a ford”), which had refused to open its gates to him. The town and its surrounding district were taken, and Menahem took horrible vengeance on the population. The reign of Menahem, which, as regards religion, resembled that of his predecessors, lasted ten years. But it may truly be characterized as the beginning of the end, for with it commenced the acknowledged dependence of the northern kingdom upon Assyria, of which the ultimate outcome was the fall of Samaria and the deportation of Israel into the land of the conqueror. Leaving aside questions of chronology, the Assyrian monuments enable us

more clearly to understand the biblical account of the relations between Menahem and his eastern suzerain (verses 19, 20). Thus we learn that after a period of decadence which may account for the independent progress of Jeroboam II., perhaps even for the occupation of Tiphshah by Menahem, a military adventurer of the name of Pul, apparently sprung from the lower orders, seized the crown of Assyria and assumed the title of Tiglath-pileser II. The first monarch of that name, five centuries earlier, had founded the power of Assyria, which was now to be re-established. In the very year of his accession he vanquished and impaled the king of Babylon, and henceforth himself assumed that title. Two years later he turned his armies to the west, and after a siege of three years took the Syrian city Arpad, in the neighborhood of Hamath, and not far from Damascus (cf. Isa. 10 : 9 ; 36 : 19 ; 2 K. 18 : 34 ; Jer. 49 : 23). Without following his further military expeditions, it may suffice to state that three years later (in the eighth year of his reign), he is described on the monuments as receiving the tribute of Menahem of Israel among those of other vassal kings. The shattering of the power of the Syrian confederacy and the occupation of Hamath fully explain the biblical notice of the advance of Pul or Tiglath-pileser II. into the northern kingdom. His progress was for the time arrested by the submission of Menahem, and his payment of an annual tribute of one thousand talents of silver, or about £375,000, which the king of Israel levied by a tax of fifty shekels, or about £6 5s., on all the wealthier inhabitants of his realm. This would imply that there were sixty thousand contributors to this tax—a large figure—indicating at the same time the wide prosperity of the country and the extent of the burden which the tribute must have laid on the people. On these hard conditions Menahem was “confirmed” in “the kingdom” by the Assyrian conqueror. A. E.

**8-12.** *Reign of Zechariah over Israel. Fulfilment of the Promise made to Jehu.* The writer has nothing to record of Zechariah but his murder by Shallum after a reign of six months. Verses 8, 9 and 11 contain the usual formula. Verse 10 gives the only event that needed record. Verse 12 recalls to the reader's atten-

tion a previous passage in which a prophecy had been mentioned, whereof Zechariah's reign was the fulfilment. *Hammond.*

**10. Before the people.** Rather "before people." Openly and publicly, that is, as Jehu, the founder of the dynasty, had slain his own predecessor Joram (2 K. 9:24). The slaughter of Zechariah fulfilled the prophecy of Amos, that "God would rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword" (Amos 7:9), and also that of Hosea, that Jehovah would "avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (Hos. 1:4).

**12. This was the word of the Lord.** This loss of the kingdom in the person of his fourth descendant was in exact accordance with the prediction of a prophet, probably Elisha, to Jehu, that his children should keep the throne *until* the fourth generation. B. C. — **And so it came to pass.** The house of Jehu ceased to reign in the fourth generation of the descendants of its founder. In breaking off from the divinely chosen house of David, and choosing to themselves a king, the Israelites had sown the seeds of instability in their state and put themselves at the mercy of any ambitious pretender. Five dynasties had already borne rule in the two hundred years that the kingdom had lasted; four more were about to hold the throne in the remaining fifty years of its existence. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," though said of Reuben only, fairly expressed the character of the entire kingdom, with which Reuben cast in its lot at the time of the separation.

**13-15. Short and Unimportant Reign of Shallum.** Three verses suffice for the reign of Shallum, the son of Jabesh, who held the throne for only thirty days. Hearing of his conspiracy, Menahem, the son of Gadi—"the general," as Josephus calls him—marched from Tirzah to Samaria, got Shallum into his power, and put him to death (verse 14). The writer concludes with the usual formula. *Hammond.*

**17-22. Reign of Menahem, Ten Years.**

**19. Pul, the king of Assyria.** This is the first distinct mention which we find in Scripture of Assyria as an aggressive power. From the native monuments we learn that she had been now for above a century pushing her conquests beyond the Euphrates, and seeking to reduce under her dominion the entire tract between that river and Egypt. One great monarch had conquered Northern Syria, and forced Phœnicia to pay him tribute; another, his son

(Shalmaneser II.), had invaded Southern Syria, reduced Hamath, ravaged the territory of Damascus, and received tribute from Jehu; a third, the grandson of this last, had taken Damascus itself, and claimed authority, not only over Phœnicia and Samaria, but over Philistia and Edom. It is even doubtful whether Judea had not acknowledged Assyrian suzerainty, and consented that her monarchs should receive their investiture from the hands of the Ninevite king. But hitherto there had been no hostile invasion of Jewish or Israelite soil by an Assyrian army; and so the sacred historian, to whom we may ascribe the natural feelings of a patriot, had allowed himself to maintain silence with respect to the encroachments of this hated and dreaded power. At length, however, an actual invasion took place—Pul "came against the land"—and it would have been no longer honest to maintain silence. The Assyrians are therefore now at last formally introduced into the history. B. C. — The monarch who inaugurated the most brilliant period of Assyria's history bore the two names of Tiglath-pileser and Pul. Properly, Tiglath-pileser (Tiglath-palzir) was the throne-name which he bore in Assyria, as monarch of that country, and Pul (Pulu) was the throne-name which he bore in Babylonia, as king of Babylon. The double nomenclature was not readily understood by foreigners. We are indebted for the identification to a cuneiform document. G. R.

**23-26. Short Reign of Pekahiah.** The short reign of Pekahiah was wholly undistinguished. He held the throne for two years only, or perhaps for parts of two years, and performed no action that any historian has thought worthy of record. Our author has nothing to relate of him but the circumstances of his death (verse 25), wherewith he combines the usual formulæ (verses 23, 24, 26). *Hammond.*

Of Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, nothing is recorded except that he maintained the calf worship, like his predecessors, doing "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, by not departing from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" (verse 24), and that he was barbarously murdered by one of his captains—Pekah, the son of Remaliah. The scene of his slaughter was the royal palace in Samaria, where he was attacked by Pekah at the head of a band of fifty Gileadite desperadoes, who slew him in his harem, with the two attendants who alone were faithful to him, Argob and Arieah. G. R.

## Section 28.

## REIGNS OF PEKAH AND HOSHEA.

2 KINGS 15 : 27-31 ; 17 : 1-5.

**15 : 27** IN the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD : he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin. In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maacah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali ; and he carried them captive to Assyria. And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. Now the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

**17 : 1** In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel, and reigned nine years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, yet not as the kings of Israel that were before him. Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria ; and Hoshea became his servant, and brought him presents. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea ; for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and offered no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year : therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

*The brief text above, from 2 Kings, must be supplemented from 2 Chron. 28 : 5-15 and Isa. 7 : 1-9 ; 8 : 1-8 ; and the Assyrian inscriptions. B.*

## REIGN OF PEKAH, TWENTY YEARS.

**51st of Uzziah to 20th of Jotham.**

2 KINGS 15 : 27-31.

THE short reign—two years—of Pekahiah, son and successor of Menahem, ended with conspiracy and his violent death ; one Pekah, son of Remaliah, a captain of his, being the successful usurper. During his reign of twenty years—religiously like his predecessors, doing only evil—Tiglath-pileser came up against him, dismembering his kingdom by wresting from it the region of Naphtali, including several important cities (mentioned in verse 29). This Pekah became prominent, associated with Rezin, king of Syria, in wars with Ahaz, king of Judah, with various success ; besieging Jerusalem unsuccessfully (2 K. 16 : 5), but smiting the army of Ahaz with immense slaughter (according to 2 Chron. 28 : 5-8). To these events we refer more in detail in tracing the history of Judah. H. C.

The coming ruin was hastened by Pekah, who, after slaying Pekahiah the son of Menahem, ascended the throne B.C. 759. He allied himself with the Damascene kingdom, the hereditary enemy of Israel, against Judah, probably with the hope of strengthening him-

self by the overthrow of Judah and the dethronement of the house of David, against the encroaching power of Assyria. The ancient hatred of Ephraim toward Judah, which had so frequently during the last two centuries led to sanguinary conflicts, was now once more to burst forth with fury, and to hasten the destruction of Ephraim. The Assyrian monarch Tiglath-pileser, whose assistance had been invoked by Ahaz, having first executed against Damascus the judgment predicted by Amos (chap. 1 : 3 sqq.), took the provinces east of the Jordan and the northern portions of those west of this river (Galilee), and carried away the tribes inhabiting these regions into the interior of Asia, about 740 B.C. This was the *second stage of the judgment*. Isaiah (9 : 9) describes the people of Samaria, however, as receiving all such Divine corrections with arrogance and presumption, and comforting themselves with wicked hopes of better times. O.

During the lifetime of Menahem Israel remained tributary to Assyria, and the Assyrian king did not again turn his arms against the west. After the death of Menahem and the murder of his son Pekahiah, however, important changes took place. The usurper, Pekah, in alliance with Rezin of Damascus, attacked

Judah with the intention of overthrowing the dynasty of David and placing on the throne of Jerusalem a vassal king whose father's name, Tabeel, shows that he must have been a Syrian. Jotham, the Jewish king, died shortly after the war began, and the youth and weakness of his son and successor Ahaz laid Judah open to its antagonists, who were further aided by a disaffected party within the capital itself (Isa. 8 : 6). In his extremity, therefore, Ahaz appealed to the Assyrian monarch, who was already seeking an excuse for crushing Damascus, and reducing the Jewish kingdom, with its important fortress of Jerusalem, to a condition of vassalage. In B.C. 734, accordingly, Tiglath-pileser marched into Syria. Rezin was defeated in a pitched battle, his chariots broken in pieces, his captains captured and impaled, while he himself escaped to Damascus, where he was closely besieged by the enemy. The territory of Damascus was now devastated with fire and sword, its sixteen districts were "overwhelmed as with a flood," and the beautiful gardens by which the capital was surrounded were destroyed, every tree being cut down for use in the siege. The city itself, however, proved too strong to be taken by assault; so, leaving a sufficient force before it to reduce it by famine, Tiglath-pileser proceeded against the late allies of the Syrian king. Israel was the first to be attacked. The north of the country was overrun, and the tribes beyond the Jordan carried into captivity. Gilead and Abel-beth-maachah are mentioned by name as among the towns that were taken and sacked. The Assyrians then fell upon Ammon and Moab, which had aided Israel and Syria in the attack on Judah, and next made their way along the sea-coast into the country of the Philistines, who had seized the opportunity of the late war to shake off the yoke of the Jewish king. Their leader, Khanun or Hanno of Gaza, fled into Egypt; but Gaza itself was captured and laid under tribute, its gods carried away, and an image of the Assyrian king set up in the temple of Dagon. Ekron and Ashdod were also punished, and Metinti of Ashkelon committed suicide in order to escape the vengeance of the conqueror. Now that all fear of danger in the south had been removed, Tiglath-pileser marched back into the northern kingdom and took Samaria. *Sayce.*

Now, for the first time since the separation of the brother-nations, the northern kingdom had entered into a formal league against Judah with a heathen nation, and that its hereditary foe, Syria. And the significance of this fact

deepens as we remember that the final object was not merely to conquer Judah, but to dethrone the house of David, and substitute for it a Syrian, presumably a heathen ruler. So forgetful had Israel become of its great hope, and of the very meaning of its national existence. For the first time also, at least in the biblical record, does the Assyrian power now appear on the scene of Palestine, first to be bought off by Menahem (2 K. 15 : 19, 20); then to be invoked by Ahaz, with the result of rendering Judah tributary, and finally of overthrowing Israel. The continuance of the northern kingdom was now only a question of time, and the exile of Israel had actually begun. Judah had become dependent on Assyria, and henceforth was only able fitfully and for brief periods to shake off its yoke, till it finally shared the fate of its sister-kingdom. Lastly, Syria ceased to exist as an independent power, and became a province of Assyria.

But in the history of the kingdom of God every movement is also a step toward the great goal, and all judgment becomes larger mercy. So was it on this occasion also. Henceforth the whole historical scene was changed. The prophetic horizon had enlarged. The falling away of Israel had become already initially the life of the world. The fullest predictions of the person and work of the Messiah and of His universal kingdom date from this period. Even the new relations of Israel formed the basis for wider conceptions and spiritual progression. Those petty wars with Syria, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia, which had filled the previous history, now ceased to be factors in it, and Israel found itself face to face with the great world-power. This contact gave new form and shape to the idea of a universal kingdom of God, wide as the world, which had hitherto only been presented in dim outline, and of which only the germ had existed in the religious consciousness of the people. Thus in every respect this was the beginning of a new era—an era of judgment indeed, but also of larger mercy; an era of new development in the history of the kingdom of God; a type also of the final hardening of Israel in the rejection of their Messiah, and of the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. A. E.

REIGN OF HOSHEA, NINE YEARS.

**13th of Ahaz to 6th of Hezekiah.**

2 KINGS 17 : 1-5.

**2. But not as the kings of Israel.**  
For, whereas the kings of Israel had hitherto

maintained guards upon their frontiers, to hinder their subjects from going up to worship at Jerusalem, Hoshea gave them all free liberty to worship there, and probably encouraged them in demolishing the high places (2 Chron. 30, 31). On this account he has, as to religion, the best character given him in Scripture of all that reigned before him over Israel after the division of the kingdom; for, although he was by no means perfect in the true worship of God, yet his ways were less offensive than the ways of any who had preceded him in that kingdom. *Prideaux*.—Hoshea's general attitude toward Jehovah was much the same as that of former kings of Israel. He maintained the calf worship, leaned upon "arms of flesh," and turned a deaf ear to the teaching of the prophets—*e.g.*, Hosea and Micah, who addressed their warnings to him. But he was not guilty of any special wickedness—he set up no new idolatry; he seems to have allowed his subjects, if they pleased, to attend the festival worship at Jerusalem.

**4. He had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt.** We learn from the prophet Hosea that the expediency of calling in Egypt as a counterpoise to Assyria had long been in the thoughts of those who directed the policy of the Israelite State (see Hos. 7:11; 12:1, etc.). Now at last the plunge was taken. An Ethiopian dynasty of some strength and vigor had possession of Egypt, and held its court during some part of the year at Memphis (Hos. 9:6). The king who occupied the throne was called Shabak. *Hammond*.

The Ethiopian king Shabaka, or Sabako, is the So of the Old Testament, whom Hoshea had bribed to help him against the Assyrian monarch. But before that help could be sent the Assyrian had descended on his rebellious vassal, whom he dethroned and imprisoned. Now, as ever, the Egyptian had proved to be a "bruised reed" to those who trusted in him. Sabako, in fact, was too much engaged in consolidating his power in Egypt to think of foreign conquests. *Sayce*.

**5. Went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.** From some time in Hoshea's seventh year to some time in his ninth. According to the Hebrew mode of reckoning, parts of years are counted as years; and thus the siege need not have lasted much over a year, though it may have been extended to nearly three years. In either case, there was ample time for Shabak to have brought up his forces, had he been so minded; and his failure to do so, or in any way to succor his ally,

showed how little reliance was to be placed on Egyptian promises (cf. chap. 18:21). *Hammond*.—From the fourth to the sixth of Hezekiah, and from the seventh to the ninth of Hoshea (2 K. 18:9, 10); two years, therefore, according to our reckoning, but three, according to the inclusive reckoning of the Hebrews. This was a long time for so small a place to resist the Assyrians; but Samaria was favorably situated on a steep isolated hill, and was no doubt defended with desperation. B. C.

Hoshea's revolt from Shalmaneser seems to have been no less an act of patriotism than Hezekiah's, though not prompted by such purely religious motives. Hoshea was, in fact, the best king in the whole line from Jeroboam. Nor ought we to be surprised that the final catastrophe came in his reign. Speaking humanly, the State was past redemption; the utter corruption and impenitence of the people are attested by the denunciations of Hosea, and confirmed by their scornful rejection of Hezekiah's call to repentance and union. Even the king was only some shades better than his predecessors, and it was no partial reform that could save and renew the State. Viewing the case from the higher ground taken throughout the Scripture history—the inseparable connection between national prosperity or adversity and religious obedience or rebellion—we cannot say that it was too late for Israel to be saved; as Nineveh was, when her people repented at the preaching of Jonah. They had only forty days of grace; Hoshea and his people had three years; let us now see how they used them. In the third year of Hoshea (B.C. 726) Shalmaneser, who had succeeded Tiglath-pileser, in B.C. 730 marched against Hoshea to enforce payment of the tribute, the refusal of which, in the very year of Hezekiah's accession, is perhaps another proof of a common feeling. Hoshea submitted and became tributary to Assyria. His second revolt is morally justified by patriotism; and even politically, the favorite test of success might not have been wanting, as we see in the case of Hezekiah. But, in the religious point of view, it was an utter wrong and failure. Had Hoshea made common cause with Hezekiah, and thrown himself on the protection of Jehovah, we have a right to believe that the times of David might have returned. But Hoshea took the very course denounced by the law of Moses—reliance upon Egypt. The long contest had begun between the sovereigns of Egypt and Western Asia for the frontier province of Palestine, and both had their partisans at the court of Samaria. The



king of Egypt, who is called So in the Scripture narrative, was either Shebek I., the Sabaco of Herodotus, or his son Shebek II., the Sevechus of Manetho. He belonged to the warlike twenty-fifth (Ethiopian) dynasty, who opposed the progress of Assyria with all their force. Hoshea formed a secret league with him, and withheld the accustomed tribute from Shalmaneser; who, informed of the conspiracy, seized the king of Israel and shut him up in prison, where he was bound with fetters and treated with cruel indignity. His sudden destruction is compared by the prophet Hosea to the disappearance of the foam upon the water. The imprisonment of Hoshea clearly preceded the siege of Samaria: it may be that he was seized on a visit to Nineveh for the purpose of excusing his conduct. Shalmaneser then marched against Israel; and after overrunning the country, laid siege to Samaria in the seventh year of Hoshea, the fourth of Hezekiah (B.C. 723). Then followed one of those memorable defences, the despairing efforts of dying nations. We have no details of the siege; but Isaiah gives a glowing description of the mighty instrument of Jehovah smiting like a hailstorm the glorious beauty of the city, which towered on its hill like a crown of pride, the head of the fat valleys of the drunkards of Ephraim. Its strong position enabled the city to hold out for three years, during which we learn from the Assyrian monuments that Shalmaneser died and was succeeded by his son Sargon, a change not noticed in the Scripture narrative, which, after the first mention of Shalmaneser, only speaks of the "king of Assyria." The city was taken in the ninth year of Hoshea, the sixth of Hezekiah. Sargon himself records the capture of Samaria in the following terms; "Samaria I looked at,

I captured; 27,280 men who dwelt in it I carried away." According to the Scripture narrative, he "carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan and the cities of the Medes." This deportation of the people extended to Samaria and its dependent towns, a region small in comparison to the original kingdom of the ten tribes. The region east of Jordan had already been so treated by Tiglath-pileser, who had also carried away the northern tribes, but not to the same extent; for a remnant were left, who form the nucleus of the mixed population of the later Galilee. The cities in the south of Ephraim, which had been attached to Judah by conquest, or by the bond of religion under Hezekiah, probably shared the fortunes of the southern kingdom. P. S.

The predictions of Amos and Hosea assigning the causes of the captivity of Israel convey in substance the great and comprehensive truths respecting God's dealing with man. As He deals with His own chosen people, so will He deal with men. The history of Israel is a history and illustration of the spirit and principles and methods of God's government on the earth. What *God is*, and what *God will do* in every juncture of human interests and affairs, and in connection with every form of human conduct, is here exemplified by actual events. And what *man is*, and what *man will do* in the face of multiplied marvels of God's bounty and grace and patience, is here amply disclosed in the deeds of successive generations. And to convey this knowledge to all the after generations, *to impress upon us these supreme lessons for our use and eternal profit, is the one design of this Inspired Record!* B.

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## Section 29.

SAMARIA FINALLY TAKEN AND ISRAEL CARRIED TO ASSYRIA. REASONS ASSIGNED FOR THEIR CAPTIVITY. SAMARIA REPEOPLED BY ASSYRIAN COLONISTS. THEIR MIXED RELIGION.

2 KINGS 17: 6-41; 18: 9-12.

**17:6** In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away unto Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

**18:9** And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh

year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against  
10 Samaria, and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it : even in the sixth year  
11 of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And  
the king of Assyria carried Israel away unto Assyria, and put them in Halah, and in Habor,  
12 on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes : because they obeyed not the voice of  
the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the  
LORD commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it.

17 : 7 And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their  
God, which brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king  
8 of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the nations, whom the  
LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they made.  
9 And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against the LORD their  
God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to  
10 the fenced city. And they set them up pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under  
11 every green tree : and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom  
the LORD carried away before them ; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to  
12 anger : and they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.  
13 Yet the LORD testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by the hand of every prophet, and of  
every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my  
statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you  
14 by the hand of my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hard-  
ened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in the LORD their God.  
15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his  
testimonies which he testified unto them ; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and  
went after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged  
16 them that they should not do like them. And they forsook all the commandments of the  
LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and  
17 worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their  
daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold them-  
18 selves to do that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. There-  
fore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight : there was  
19 none left but the tribe of Judah only. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD  
20 their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And the LORD rejected  
all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until  
21 he had cast them out of his sight. For he rent Israel from the house of David ; and they  
made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king : and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD,  
22 and made them sin a great sin. And the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam  
23 which he did ; they departed not from them ; until the LORD removed Israel out of his  
sight, as he spake by the hand of all his servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away  
out of their own land to Assyria, unto this day.

24 And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Avva,  
and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the  
25 children of Israel : and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. And so it  
was, at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD : therefore the  
26 LORD sent lions among them, which killed some of them. Wherefore they spake to the  
king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast carried away, and placed in the cities  
of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land : therefore he hath sent lions among  
them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the  
27 land. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom  
ye brought from thence ; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the man-  
28 ner of the God of the land. So one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria  
29 came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. Howbeit every  
nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the  
30 Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. And the men of  
Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath  
31 made Ashima, and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their  
32 children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim. So they

feared the LORD, and made unto them from among themselves priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law or after the commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel; with whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them: But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a stretched out arm, him shall ye fear, and unto him shall ye bow yourselves, and to him shall ye sacrifice: and the statutes and the ordinances, and the law and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods: and the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods: but the LORD your God shall ye fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies. Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images; their children likewise, and their children's children, as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

SAMARIA TAKEN AND ISRAEL CARRIED INTO ASSYRIA.

2 Kings 17 : 6 ; 18 : 9-11.

THIS occurred in the ninth year of Hoshea, the nineteenth and last king of Israel in a period of two hundred and fifty-four years. The division of Solomon's kingdom occurred 975 B.C. The final captivity of Israel took place 721 B.C. (or, 718). The other kingdom (of Judah) lasted one hundred and thirty-five years longer, until 586 B.C. Then Judah was carried into the same region of country by the Babylonian power, which meanwhile had succeeded to the Assyrian. Probably upon the restoration of the Judahites, or Jews, after seventy years of captivity, a proportionate number of the northern kingdom (of the Ten Tribes) returned and became incorporated with their brethren of Judah. Now, however, Sargon transported the most energetic and useful among the people of Israel into his own domain, that he might be the gainer by their skill and toil, and save the trouble and expense of conquering them again. With settlers from Assyria he replaced the removed Israelites from Samaria. This policy was repeated by Esarhaddon, who substituted other Assyrians for the remnant of efficient Israelites. These Eastern strangers gradually affiliated with the remaining Israelites, and the population thus resulting took the name of Samaritans, from the rebuilt city of Samaria. B.

Hoshea, who obtained the throne by conspiring against and slaying Pekah, and who, according to 2 K. 17 : 2, was comparatively a better king, became tributary to the Assyrian king Shalmaneser, but sought, by concluding an alliance with So, king of Egypt (the Saba-

kon of Herodotus), to release himself from this dependence. Shalmaneser, who was then occupied in Hither Asia, immediately marched into the land of Israel. Hoshea, after being, as it seems, summoned to the Assyrian camp to account for his conduct, was imprisoned, and Samaria attacked. But an heroic resistance must have been made in this as in all the deadly struggles of the Israelites; for it was not till after a three years' siege that it was taken, and "the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim trodden under foot" (Isa. 28 : 3), not, as is now settled by the cuneiform inscriptions, by Shalmaneser, but by his successor, Sargon, mentioned in Isa. 20 : 1. The people were led into captivity 720 B.C., and thus was the judgment accomplished. The dwelling-places assigned to the exiles were situated in Media and the upper provinces of Assyria (verse 6). It has been already remarked that the continued existence of the Ten Tribes during the subsequent centuries is attested by 1 Chron. 5 : 26, "unto this day," and Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 5, 2); their restoration is also expressly foretold by the prophets. *Oehler.*

The recently exhumed monuments of Assyria illustrate in a remarkable manner the minute accuracy of the sacred narrative. It has just been stated (verse 5) that Shalmaneser (the fourth of that name), king of Assyria, came up against Hoshea. But though Shalmaneser commenced the siege of Samaria, he did not complete his work. That was done by his usurping successor, Sargon. The siege began in the fourth year of Shalmaneser's reign, and lasted till his sixth, which was his last; for in that year the usurper Sargon seized the throne, and continued his predecessor's campaigns against Samaria and Tyre. In his inscriptions, he

claims the conquest of Samaria as an event in the first year of his reign. We may note the careful accuracy of the writer of Kings, who says (18 : 10) Shalmaneser besieged Samaria, and that at the end of three years *they* took it. Sargon further tells us, in his cylinder, that he deprived Samaria of its partial independence, and appointed an Assyrian governor over it, further punishing it by carrying off 27,280 of the inhabitants, and imposing on the impoverished remainder the same tax to which the city had been liable before its revolt. Sargon also states that, six years afterward, "he subdued the uncultivated plains of South Arabia, which had never before given tribute to Assyria," and carried captive some of the Thermodites (a well-known Arab tribe), and settled them in Samaria. Hence came Geshem and the Arabians whom Nehemiah mentions among the Samaritan opponents of the rebuilding of the temple. The Sacred History tells us that the Assyrian king placed the captives in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan (or, rather, "on the Habor, the river of Gozan"), and in the cities of the Medes. Halah (or *Chälach*, as it would be pronounced) has been identified by Layard with a remarkable mound marking an ancient city, and called *Gla*, in the great plains of the Khabour (= Habor), a western affluent of the Euphrates, often mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions, which waters the wide district of Gozan, the Gauzanitis of the Greeks. The cities of the Medes (or, as the Septuagint reads, the mountains of the Medes) refer to the wild highland region, east of the Tigris, north of the Persian Gulf. This region the records of Sargon tell us he overran, and annexed it to Assyria; and "changed the abodes" of his subjects, planting conquered Ashdod in the extreme west of his new empire with captives from Media. Thus he made room for the Israelites, whom he transplanted to the extreme east of his newest conquest. We may note also that he tells us that in his second year he took Hamath, the capital of the Hittites in northern Syria; and after separating from the spoil two hundred chariots and six hundred horsemen as his royal portion, he transported the remainder of the inhabitants to other regions; and his captives from the east, "in the midst of Hamath I settled them," while the Book of Kings tells us that Samaria was resettled by men, among others, from Hamath. *Tristram*.

The comparatively small number of Israelites who were carried into captivity shows that Sargon contented himself with removing only those persons and their families who had taken

part in the revolt against him; in fact, Samaria was treated pretty much as Jerusalem was by Nebuchadnezzar in the time of Jehoiachin. The greater part of the old population was allowed to remain in its native land. This fact disposes of the modern theories which assume that the whole of the Ten Tribes were carried away. *Sayce*.

The seed of Jacob, whose history we have heretofore followed in the land of Canaan, were now dispersed in four or five different countries. Assyria, Media, Chaldea, Egypt, and Palestine contained each a section of the chosen people. The prophecy of Moses, uttered eight or nine hundred years before, received its first, but not its only fulfilment; on account of their sins and provocations, the chosen people, whom God loved so well, were scattered among the heathen. Though a few of the captive Israelites remained in Nineveh, the greater part were placed in the province of Media. Media lay to the east of Assyria. Its aspect was wild and mountainous; thus forming a great contrast to the flat plains of Assyria and Mesopotamia. Its northern boundary was formed by the great chain of mountains that spread out on either side from Ararat, and that sometimes rise to heights that are almost lost to view in the skies. It is a singular fact that the Israelites were thus brought back to the neighborhood of the first settlements of the human race. Some of them would drink from rivers cooled by the snows of Ararat. W. G. B.

Thus ended the kingdom of Israel, after a duration of just two hundred and fifty-five years, under nineteen kings and seven dynasties, not reckoning among the latter the ephemeral usurpations of Zimri and Shallum. The last two of these dynasties perished with their founders, Pekah and Hoshea; three, those of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Menahem, had two kings each; the house of Omri numbered four kings in three generations; Jehu's, the longest of all, reigned for five generations from father to son, and all its kings died a natural death except the last, Zechariah. Of the other kings, only Jeroboam I., Baasha, Omri, Ahaziah, and Menahem had the same lot; the rest were slain by traitors or in battle, or died in captivity. Their character was even worse than their fate. Not one in the whole list is commended either for morality or piety; all were idolaters, and traitors to Jehovah. Even the zeal of Jehu ended in idol worship, and the patriotism of Hoshea was marred by disloyalty to God. The sacred historian concludes their history with an impressive and affecting summary of their sins, in

which they were followed by Judah, provoking the anger of Jehovah till "He removed them out of His sight." First, "there was none left but the tribe of Judah only;" but their sins had already caused Jehovah to "rend Israel from the house of David;" and at last "Jehovah rejected all the seed of Israel." But not till He had given them abundant invitations to return to God by the long line of prophets, the preachers of repentance and reformation. Besides the many whose names are too often forgotten because their writings are not extant, Elijah and Elisha shine amid the darkest night of Israel's idolatry; Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, seals his testimony against the apostasy of Judah with his martyrdom; and the century before the fall of Samaria is glorified by the names of Jonah, Amos, and Hosea in Israel, and Joel, Isaiah, and Micah in Judah. P. S.

EXTINCTION OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL,  
CAUSED SOLELY BY THE NATION'S WILFUL  
REJECTION OF GOD'S COVENANT MERCY, AND  
OPEN, FLAGRANT, AND PROLONGED DISOBE-  
DIENCE TO HIS COMMANDS.

*Verses 7-23.*

Here the writer ceases to be the mere historian, and becomes the religious teacher and prophet, drawing out the lessons of history and justifying the ways of God to man. As Bähr says, he "does not carry on the narrative as taken from the original authorities, but himself here begins a review of the history and fate of Israel, which ends with verse 23, and forms an independent section by itself." The section divides itself into four portions: (1) From verse 7 to verse 12, a general statement of Israel's wickedness; (2) from verse 13 to verse 15, a special aggravation of their guilt—viz., their rejection of prophets; (3) verses 16 and 17 contain a specification of their chief acts of sin; and (4) from verse 18 to verse 23, a general summary, including some words of warning to Judah. *Hammond.*—The Bible does not simply relate, but draws aside the veil and shows us the innermost springs of God's providence, and how they work. It teaches us to understand the deepest causes of the rise and fall of nations. The causes it insists on are not economical, or political, or intellectual, but religious, and its lessons are for all time. We may say of this survey of Israel's history—these things "are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). J. O.

The brevity of the account of the fall of

Samaria contrasts with the long enumeration of the sins which caused it. Modern critics assume that verses 7-23 are "an interpolation by the Deuteronomic writer," apparently for no reason but because they trace Israel's fall to its cause in idolatry. But surely the bare notice in verse 6, immediately followed by verse 24, cannot have been all that the original historian had to say about so tragic an end of so large a part of the people of God. The whole purpose of the Old Testament history is not to chronicle events, but to declare God's dealings, and the fall of a kingdom was of little moment, except as revealing the righteousness of God. These verses, closely looked at, disclose a very striking progress of thought. In the centre stands verse 13, telling of the mission of the prophets. Before it, verses 7-12 narrate Israel's sin, which culminates in provoking the Lord to anger (verse 11). After it, the sins are reiterated with noticeable increase of emphasis, and again culminate in provoking the Lord to anger (verse 17). So we have two degrees of guilt—one before and one after the prophet's messages; and two kindlings of God's anger—one which led to the sending of the prophets, and one which led to the destruction of Israel. A. M.

Scarcely on any other occasion does the sacred writer allow himself reflections of this kind. But they are appropriate, and almost needful, at the close of a history which relates events in their bearing on the kingdom of God, and views Israel as a nation called to be the servants and the messengers of the Lord. They explain the inner meaning of God's dealings in the past, and the deeper causes of a rejection and an exile which cannot end till Israel and Judah, no longer hostile nor separate, shall in one common repentance turn to seek Jehovah their God and the Son of David their King. A. E.

*7-17. God's judgment upon Israel vindicated.  
The lessons of the history rehearsed in summary.*

In the same plain, dispassionate style which marks all the inspired writers, this one, at a time and place most appropriate and called for, records what God had done for Israel, what He asked of Israel, and how Israel had treated His favors and requests. He had, first of all, delivered them from the galling and debasing servitude of Egypt and the Pharaohs. He had assigned to their possession the finest territory of the East. From this, *their* land, He had cast out heathen nations. Singling out the people from all others, He had exercised a peculiar personal rule and care over them. Entering into a special personal covenant, he had given

specific principles and detailed rules by which they might easily secure all the blessings and promises of His covenant. Thus it would seem that God had done everything he could to attract their confidence, to win their affection, and secure their grateful obedience.

But "so it was that *the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God.*" They worshipped other gods, which He had expressly forbidden. They carried out the idolatrous customs and practices ordained by heathen nations, in place of the prescribed ceremonials of His worship. They preferred to obey the decrees of kings "which they had made," rather than the rightful commands of the supreme Jehovah. They overlaid the worship and the commands of God with pretences and perversions (verse 9), impiously attempting to mix the false and specious with the true and Divine, and so obscuring the nature and the words, the ways and works of God. "They built high places" or idolatrous shrines (verse 10) in every hamlet, town, and city. They set up idols in every hill, and established their abominable worship in every grove. Like the heathen nations, whom they knew that God had condemned and punished for this very thing, they burned incense and wrought exceeding wickedness. In all this they knowingly provoked God to anger, for He had said, "Ye shall not do this thing."

But even this was not all. When, under Jeroboam and Ahab, they had thus trampled on God's covenant and authority by shameless and defiant service of idols, God had still forborne with them. To the laws and counsels long before given through Moses and Samuel, He adds the direct and special testimony of Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, and other prophets and seers. The burden of this testimony, clearly authenticated by miracles, was simply a reminder His statutes and an entreaty to keep them. Yet they neither heard nor heeded. They *would not* hear. Like stubborn oxen, though themselves reasoning creatures with a conscience, they made their necks stiff, and would not submit to the easy yoke of Divine love. Openly they rejected His statutes, wilfully they repelled His covenant, defiantly they scorned His warnings and entreaties. They became assimilated to the idols they worshipped. As these were vanity or nothingness, so they lost all force of character, all power to know and do that which was right and advantageous. In this senseless impotence of soul, the indictment declares in summing up the various forms of idolatry, they made and

bowed down before molten calves, they established secret orgies in the groves, they worshipped the sun, moon, stars, and the planets, and they served Baal. It further particularizes their burning of children in sacrifice to the fire god, and (from the connection here and elsewhere with Moloch) their horrid use of these human victims as means of divination, or methods of foretelling future events. By these impious and inhuman practices, long wilfully maintained, they "sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger." B.

7. The first characteristic of Israel's sin was ungrateful departure from God. There is a world of pathos and meaning in that "their God," which is enhanced by the allusion to the Egyptian deliverance. All sins are attempts to break the chain that binds us to God—a chain woven of a thousand linked benefits. All practically deny His possession of us, and ours of Him, and display the short memory which ingratitude has. All have that other feature hinted at here—the contrast, so absurd if it were not so sad, between the worth and power of the God who is left and the other gods who are preferred. The essential meanness and folly of Israel is repeated by every heart departing from the living God.

9. Here the charge is of covering idolatry with a cloak of Jehovah worship. A varnish of religion is convenient and cheap, and often effectual in deceiving ourselves as well as others; but "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he," whatever his cloak may be; and the thing which we count most precious and long most for is our God, whatever our professions of orthodox religion.

10-12. The idolatry is then described, in rapid touches, as universal. Wherever there was a solitary watchman's tower among the pastures was a high place, and they were reared in every city. Images and Asherim deformed every hill-top and stood under every spreading tree. Everywhere incense loaded the heavy air with its foul fragrance. The old scenes of unnamable abomination, which had been so terribly avenged, seemed to have come back, and to cry aloud for another purging by fire and sword. The terrible upshot of all was "to provoke the Lord to anger." The New Testament is as emphatic as the Old in asserting that there is the capacity of anger in the God whose name is love, and that sin calls it forth. The special characteristic of sin, by which it thus attracts that lightning, is that it is disobedience. As in the first sin, so in all others, God has said,

"Ye shall not do this thing;" and we say, "Do it we will." What can the end of that be but the anger of the Lord? "Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." A. M.

**13.** God had never left Himself without living witness. Besides the written testimony of the law, He had sent them a continuous series of prophets, who "repeated and enforced the teaching of the law by word of mouth, breathing into the old words a new life, applying them to the facts of their own times, urging them on the consciences of their hearers, and authoritatively declaring to them that the terrible threatenings of the law were directed against the very sins which they habitually practised." The sin of Israel would not perhaps have been quite "without remedy" had they not for so long a time turned a deaf ear to the warnings and exhortations of the prophets, and persisting in their disobedience, their wickedness, their greed, their cruelty, their besotted idolatry, despite the scathing denunciations, the tender pleadings, the wise counsels, almost uninterruptedly addressed to them. "Stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears" (Acts 7:51), they "resisted the Holy Ghost;" and their doom had to be pronounced. *Hammond.*

**14, 15.** The heavier sin followed the Divine pleading. That Divine voice leaves no man as it finds him. If it does not sway him to obedience, it deepens his guilt, and makes him more obstinate. Like some perverse ox in the yoke, he stiffens his neck, and stands the very picture of brute obduracy. There is an awful alternative involved in our hearing of God's message, which never returns to Him void, but ever does something to the hearer, either softening or hardening, either scaling the eyes or adding another film on them, either being the savor of life unto life or of death unto death. The missions of the prophets changed forgetfulness of God's "statutes" into "rejection" of them, and made idolatry self-conscious rebellion. Alas! that men should make what is meant to be a bond to unite them to God into a wedge to part them further from Him. But how constantly that is the effect of the Gospel, and for the same reason as in Israel, that they "did not believe in the Lord their God." A. M.

**18. There was none left but the tribe of Judah only.** The "tribe of Judah" stands for the kingdom of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, into which the greater part of Dan and Simeon had also been absorbed. This became now exclusively God's "peculiar people," the object of His love and of His care.

**19. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God.**

The sharp contrast which the writer has drawn between Israel and Judah in verse 18 reminds him that the difference was only for a time. Judah followed in Israel's sins, and ultimately shared in her punishment. This verse and the next are parenthetic.

**20. And the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel.** God is no respecter of persons. As He had rejected the Ten Tribes on account of certain transgressions, which have been enumerated (verses 8-17), so, when Judah committed the self-same sins, and transgressed equally, Judah had equally to be rejected. "All the seed of Israel" is the entire nation—Israel in the widest sense, made up of Judah and of Israel in the narrow sense. **And afflicted them**—by the hands of Sargon, and Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon (2 Chron. 33:11), and Pharaoh-Nechoh, and others.

**21. For he rent;** rather, *for he had rent.* The nexus of the verse is with verse 18. The difference between the fates of Israel and Judah—the survival of Judah for a hundred and thirty-four years—is traced back to the separation under Rehoboam, and to the wicked policy which Jeroboam then pursued, and left as a legacy to his successors. *Hammond.*—**Jeroboam drave Israel from following the Lord.** The strong expression "drave Israel" is an allusion to the violent measures whereto Jeroboam had recourse in order to stop the efflux into Judea of the more religious portion of his subjects (2 Chron. 11:13-16), the calling in of Shishak, and the permanent assumption of a hostile attitude toward the southern kingdom. B. C.

**23. In judgment against their determined wickedness God returns them to bondage, from which He had originally rescued them.** Patiently He had endured their ingratitude and evil ways for many hundred years. Every possible means he had employed with the Ten Tribes during their separate existence as a nation. But their kings were all idolatrous and wicked rulers. And the mass of the people gave themselves up to impiety and the most flagrant immoralities. "Therefore the Lord removed Israel out of His sight," out of the land which He had hallowed by His special indwelling, out of the land where He had established His covenant and worship, where He had revealed His word by prophets and teachers. As a distinct people, they were dispersed among heathen nations.

Not only the entire history of the Israelites from the Exodus, but emphatically the history

of the separate kingdom of Israel, is full of vital instruction. Nowhere else stands so sharply revealed the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the natural heart of man. Nowhere else do we derive so deep an impression of the strength and tenacity of God's love to sinners. Yet, while plainly revealing the fact that judgment is God's "strange work," it as plainly shows that His long-suffering and forbearance can be overcome by the sinner's determination in disobedience and evil-doing. It proves that even the patience of God has a limit and an end. Though sentence against the evil-worker be long delayed, it will at last be surely executed. His threatenings, like His promises, never fail of accomplishment. He will destroy the wilfully impenitent soul in his sins. B.

Let it be remembered this doom of national destruction had been predicted long before, even by Moses (Lev. 26 and De. 28), and this prediction the Lord through His prophets missed no good opportunity to reaffirm. Note also that whereas, under the national policy of Jeroboam, they had in the outset severed themselves from the Mosaic institutions, especially the temple worship and the national festivals—a step which seemed to Jeroboam a necessity of their separate national existence—the Lord graciously sought to supply this lack by a specially vigorous development of religious agency through the prophets. It was sustained remarkably by miracle, as we have seen particularly in the case of Elijah and Elisha; also by wonderful interpositions of God by means of drought and famine; also by various national events—wars, deliverances. To all this we must add the labors of those prophets who wrote their messages and scattered them among the people. Of these, we have among the northern tribes Hosea and Amos certainly; and Micah seems to have some reference to this kingdom. It was only after all these efforts had proved unavailing that the Lord at length gave them up—Hosea indicates in more passages than one with what wonderful tenderness of emotion and after what touching admonitions and warnings. It was through his lips and pen that the Lord said, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me; My repentings are kindled together" (Hos. 11 : 8).

The fall of the northern kingdom was purposely made admonitory to the southern. It could not be otherwise than a solemn warning to Judah. We cannot say definitely how powerful the influence of this final fall and captivity

of Samaria was upon the people of Judah in promoting the great reform wrought by Hezekiah. This reform he commenced in his first year, six years before the final conquest; but continued it with efforts more or less vigorous throughout his reign of twenty-nine years. Consequently, under the "logic of events" the great fact was bearing upon his people of God's exterminating judgments upon that apostate nation. It was of yet more value to them because its date (after this great reform commenced) gave them the opportunity to invite their brethren of the north to come in and join them in this general turning to the Lord. In our study of that reform we shall see how intimately they must have become acquainted with the religious state of the northern kingdom; how clearly they must have seen and felt their fearful apostasy from God, and the incorrigible hardness of the masses; and how powerfully this must have augmented the moral effect of that terrific judgment, which, almost before this great reform had culminated, became a fearful fact before their eyes. After the fall of the northern kingdom prophets became more conspicuous in Judah. Released from service in the north, they concentrated their labors upon the only remaining kingdom, uniting in one grand effort to save Judah from the same threatening doom. We meet no further notice of the prophet-colleges at Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho. They may or they may not have continued in operation. Those localities were not remote from Jerusalem, but no historic allusions to their work or even to their existence have come down to us. H. C.

#### SAMARIA REPEOPLED BY ASSYRIAN COLONISTS. THEIR MIXED RELIGION.

*Verses 24-41.*

The writer, before dismissing the subject of the Israelite kingdom, proceeds to inform us of certain results of the conquest. Having removed the bulk of the native inhabitants, the Assyrians did not allow the country to lie waste, but proceeded to replace the population which they had carried off by settlers from other localities (verse 24). These settlers were, after a short time, incommoded by lions, which increased upon them and diminished their numbers (verse 25). The idea arose that the visitation was supernatural, and might be traced to the fact that the new-comers, not knowing "the manner of the God of the land," displeased Him by the neglect of His rites or by the introduction of alien worship (verse 26). A remedy



for this was sought in the sending to them from Assyria one of the priests who had been carried off, from whom it was thought they might learn how "the God of the land" was to be propitiated. This was the origin of the "mixed religion" which grew up in the country. While the nations who had replaced the Israelites brought in their own superstitions, and severally worshipped their own gods (verses 30, 31), there was a general acknowledgment of Jehovah by all of them, and a continuance of Jehovistic worship in the various high places. The nations both "feared the Lord, and served their graven images," down to the time when the writer of Kings composed his work (verses 38-41).

**24. And placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel.** Transplantation of nations, commenced by Tiglath-pileser, was practised on a still larger scale by Sargon.

**25. And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the Lord.** They were ignorant, that is, of Jehovah, and paid Him no religious regard. They brought with them their own forms of heathenism (see verses 30, 31). *Hammond.*

**28. Taught them how they should fear the Lord.** It must not be supposed that the priest sent to the colonists was a true Jehovah-priest, who instructed them in the pure worship of God. The whole context makes it clear that He was one of those who had been attached to the calf worship at one of the two national shrines—probably at Bethel. Hence, He would be willing to wink at the mixed religion, which a true Jehovah-priest would have unsparingly condemned. B. C.—The priest selected by Sargon's advisers was a Bethelite priest, and, returning thither, took up the worship familiar to him. This worship could only be that of the calf-priests instituted by Jeroboam, which was, however, most certainly a worship of Jehovah, and an imitation or travesty of the temple worship at Jerusalem.

**32. So they feared the Lord—rather, and they (also) honored Jehovah—i.e.,** with their idolatrous worship they combined also the worship of Jehovah (cf. verse 28)—**and made unto themselves of the lowest of their priests of the high places—i.e.,** followed the example of Jeroboam in taking for priests persons of all ranks, even the lowest.

**33. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods.** This syncretism, this mixed religion, is so surprising to the

writer, and so abhorrent to his religious sentiments, that he cannot but dwell upon it, not shrinking from repeating himself (see verses 32, 33, 41), in order to arrest the reader's attention, and point out to him the folly and absurdity of such conduct. The practice was still going on in his own day (verses 34, 41), and may have had attractions for the descendants of the small Israelite population which had been left in the land. The new immigrants "feared Jehovah" in a certain sense—i.e., externally. They admitted Him into their pantheon, and had ritual observances in His honor. But they did not really fear Him in their hearts. Had they done so, they would have inquired what were His laws, statutes, and ordinances, and would have set themselves to obey them. This they did not think of doing.

**40. Howbeit they did not hearken.** The mixed race, with their mixed religion, though professing to be worshippers of Jehovah, paid no attention to the warnings and threatenings of the law (verse 34), which were to them a dead letter. **But they did after their former manner—i.e.,** they continued to maintain the syncretism described in verses 28-33.

**41. So these nations—i.e.,** the Babylonians, Cuthæans, Hamathites, Avites, and Sepharvites settled in Samaria—**feared the Lord, and served their graven images.** *Hammond.*

We have, in the New Testament, a very distinct picture of the relations existing between the Jews and the Samaritans in the time of Jesus. How did these relations originate? In other words, how did the Samaritans come to be the people they were? Two elements enter into the answer of this question, one or the other of which is apt to be neglected, in the answers that are commonly given. First, Sargon and the Assyrian kings who followed him largely repopled the regions around Samaria with inhabitants who were not Israelite in race or religion, but who superstitiously adopted something of the worship of Jehovah, as the local god of the region, in addition to the religion they brought with them from their former seats (2 K. 17, etc.). They had a centre of worship for Jehovah in Bethel (17:28). When the Jews returned from the exile under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, being in high favor with the Persian king, these Samaritan worshippers of Jehovah were disposed to make common cause with them, and be regarded as of the same religion. When the Jews refused their overtures they became hostile. This state of things seems

to have been kept up through the century and more that intervened between the first year of Cyrus and the close of the twelve years of the first administration of Nehemiah. But there was a second element, without which these people would never have become the Samaritans of the New Testament. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah disclose the existence of sharp differences of opinion and practice among the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from the Exile, and their descendants. On the one hand, large numbers were disposed to intermarry and affiliate with their Samaritan, Moabite and Ammonite neighbors; and, on the other hand, Ezra and Nehemiah and those who held with them were determined to break up these practices, and to preserve Israel separate from the other peoples. Among their opponents were men of high rank, including priests and Levites; even Eliashib, the high-priest, was implicated. The last verses of Nehemiah indicate that this contest reached its crisis while Nehemiah was yet governor. One of the grandsons or great-grandsons of Eliashib married a girl of the family of Sanballat, and Nehemiah banished him. The Bible does not tell us what became of him, but we find reason for holding that he became high-priest at Mount Gerizim, and that, with his banishment, the contest between the two parties at Jerusalem virtually, at least, became a schism; those who sided against Nehemiah drawing off, becoming permanently affiliated with the people of Samaria, modifying their Judaism accordingly, and thus producing the new form of religion known as Samaritanism. It may have taken a generation or more for the new movement to assume its distinctive form. W. J. B.

#### THE TEN TRIBES NOT LOST.

The captivities which befell the kingdom of Israel are recorded in 2 K. 15 : 29 ; 17 : 6 ; 18 : 11, and 1 Chron. 5 : 26. These records speak of two deportations of the people of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes—the first at the hand of Pul (or Tiglath-pileser II.); and the second at that of Sargon, after the taking of Samaria. The first affected Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh—*i. e.*, the Israelites of the Gilead, or the region beyond the Jordan—and also the Israelites of the Galilee region—*i. e.*, Naphtali, Asher, Zebulun, and Issachar. The second is described as befalling the kingdom as a whole, after the taking of Samaria; but it seems to have fallen especially upon the tribes of Dan, Ephraim, the other half of Manasseh, and the Israelitish portion of Benjamin. These tribes

coincide as to their areas with the later province of Samaria. The return from the Babylonish captivity, which we find described in Ezra and Nehemiah, was of the Jews of the southern kingdom, which, although generally described as consisting of two tribes, really included Judah, Levi, what was left of Simeon, and a large part of Benjamin. We hear nothing, in either the Bible or parallel sources, of the return of Israelites from the more northern region, to which the Assyrians carried them captive, although some think it not improbable that part of them did come back with the returning people of Judah.

Thus far we have the facts. But as to the inferences which have been drawn from these facts, there is no agreement. The open questions are as follows: 1. Did the Assyrian captivity of Israel mean the deportation of the bulk of the people beyond the Tigris, or only that of the heads of society? 2. Did the Israelites who were carried captive lose their identity among their heathen neighbors, or did they maintain it by emigrating to a more remote country, or are they to be sought in the general body of Hebrews we afterward find in the region between the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea? The generally accepted answer to these questions is that the Ten Tribes were carried captive as a whole, leaving a mere fragment in numbers as well as in importance in the land of Israel; that the captives were lost to their nation, possibly, by absorption, but more probably by both migration and absorption; that the Jews of later times, with some exceptions, are the descendants of the people of Judah; that the identity of the posterity of the Ten Tribes is one of the unsolved problems of historic ethnology. On this basis of supposition have been built a multitude of theories, of which the identification of the Israelites with our North American Indians has furnished the basis for the historical romance called "The Book of Mormon." The Afghans, the Falashas of Abyssinia, the Bani-Israel of Bombay, the Jews of China, and the Mexicans, have each in turn been identified with the Ten Tribes. Last of all comes the Anglo-Israel theory, which identifies them with the Anglo-Saxon race, and sees in the extent and influence of the British Empire an accomplishment of the prophecies made to Israel. To me it seems that the supposition of the loss of the Ten Tribes is a mistake, and one which cannot be reconciled with the teachings of either the Old or the New Testament. The Jews of to-day are the descendants of all the tribes, who were settled in the Holy Land in Joshua's time; and

while there were some losses through absorption into pagan nationalities—Syrian, Arabic, Hellenic, and Roman—and still more through conversions to Christianity and to Islam, the integrity of the nation has not been impaired by them. It probably has gained more than it lost, through absorbing Edomites, Moabites, and the peoples settled in the Holy Land after the captivities, by the proselytism of Roman times, and by the great conversion of the Khozars of what now is Southern Russia in the Middle Ages.

1. It is a mistake to assume that any of the four captivities meant the deportation of a whole people. That would have been an undertaking too great for even a Nebuchadnezzar. Nor is such a deportation really implied in the biblical statements, as is seen when we compare one part of the record with another. Thus we read in 2 K. 15 : 29 and in 1 Chron. 5 : 26 of the captivity of the seven tribes of the Galilean and Perea regions in terms which, if taken to the foot of the letter, would mean that all the population was carried off. Yet in 2 Chron. 30 : 1-13 we find Hezekiah sending out his messengers "to Ephraim and Manasseh," and "throughout all Israel, even from Dan to Beersheba," to invite the "children of Israel" to keep the great passover with him at Jerusalem. He speaks to them as "the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria," and beseeches them to turn to God, that their brethren and children may "find compassion before them that led them captive." While most of those who heard the message only mocked at it, "divers of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem." And this minority of "the remnant" of these three tribes made with the people of Judah "a very great congregation." It was their presence that moved Isaiah to the outburst of thankful song over the latter-day glory conferred upon "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali," in which one ground of exultation is, "Thou hast multiplied the nation; thou hast increased their joy" (Isa. 9 : 1-3). I may remark here that the Hebrew word *shaar*, translated "remnant," does not necessarily mean a mere fragment, but simply that which is left when something else has been taken away, whether what has been taken is more or less than what is left. So, again, we find Ezekiel, who was taken captive in the first Babylonish captivity, writing to those who inhabited "those waste places of the land of Israel," and who were accustomed to say : "Abraham was one, and he inherited the land; but we are

many; the land is given us for inheritance." The message God sends them through His prophet is one of rebuke for their sins and impurities, and a threat of further desolation of Israel : "The pride of her power shall cease." Thus Scripture explains Scripture; and so do the monuments in the same sense. In 2 K. 17 : 6; 18 : 11 we have the statement that the Assyrians "took Samaria and carried Israel away unto Assyria." Sargon's account of the matter shows exactly what this means : "The city of Samaria I besieged; it I took; 27,280 of its inhabitants I carried away; fifty wagons I took from them; their other possessions I suffered to be taken [by the soldiers]; my lieutenant I placed over them; the tribute of the previous king I imposed upon them." This exact statement shows how little of a clean sweep was made; and we have no reason to suppose that the previous deportation of the Perea and Galilean tribes was on a greater scale than this, which carried away but 27,280 persons from the Samaritan tribes. At most it was a deportation of the heads of society, and the whole number taken from the northern kingdom cannot have been much over sixty thousand people. This left a great body, who, in the theocratic sense, were a headless "remnant," but, in the view of modern statistics, were the bulk of the Israelitish nation. "The most numerous class—*i.e.*, the poorest," to use the language of modern sociology, was left in possession.

2. It is not agreed whether the Israelite captives were all transferred to Media, or part of them settled in the Assyrian plain. From the time of the Babylonian Talmud doctors have disputed as to the location of "Halah, Habor, the river Gozan, and Are-Madaï (translated "the cities of the Medes"). The best Talmudic authority places Halah at Holvan, whose Jews paid tribute to the Prince of the Exile, the ruler of the Jews of Babylon; Habor at Hadyab in Adiabene, the seat of a Jewish school and the scene of the conversion of Queen Helena to Judaism; Gozan at Guinzak, whose Jews in the second century were so ignorant that they knew nothing of the Flood or of Job; and Are-Madaï at Hamadan or Ecbatana, the capital of Media. What is there to forbid our identification of the Jews at these well-known centres of Jewish population and worship with the descendants of the Israelitish exiles whom Tiglath-pileser II. placed there? Chiefly a Jewish tradition that, instead of remaining where they were placed, they chose to migrate farther from their own country. In fact, from the Persian

Gulf to the Black Sea every province had its Jewish population. Some considerable cities were entirely in their hands. While Babylon, no doubt, was the centre of the dispersed of Judah, there is no reason to suppose that the Jews in these other provinces were not descendants of Israelitish as well as Judean captives. The farther north and east we go in that region, the stronger is the presumption that the Jewish population comes, at least in part, from the northern kingdom.

When we turn to the New Testament, we find not a hint of the loss of the Ten Tribes from the rest. Our Lord is born and labors among the people of the region which suffered by the first deportation of Israelites to Assyria, and whom even the Judeans owned as their countrymen. From this region came all His apostles except Judas Iscariot, who was a Judean. Choice is made of twelve apostles for the establishment of the Church, with distinct reference to the number of the tribes among whom they are to labor (Matt. 19 : 28 ; Luke 22 : 30). At the day of Pentecost we find Peter making his appeal to "all the house of Israel;" and "Parthians, Medes, and Elamites" from the regions of the Assyrian captivity are the very first mentioned as hearers of the wonderful word of power; after them come "the dwellers in Mesopotamia," the region of the Babylonish captivity. Paul speaks of Agrippa of "the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to come." James addresses his Epistle "to the twelve tribes which are of the dispersion." John in the Revelation witnesses the sealing of twelve thousand of each of the twelve tribes, only Dan being omitted, while Levi is included in the number. In many places throughout that book "twelve" is used with mystic reference to Jewish history.

Still more noticeable is the silence of the New Testament. We may infer that this notion of a loss of ten tribes had no recognition in the New Testament age from the fact that it never is alleged by any one in arguing with the Jews. Our Lord might well have used it in His warnings to the Jews that mere descent from Abraham would not stand in the way of the rejection of an unbelieving people (John 8), from whom the kingdom would be taken away and given to a people bringing forth the fruits thereof (Matt. 21 : 43). Stephen might well have urged it on his murderers as right in the line of his great argument from the past of the nation. Paul might have used it with telling effect in the ninth chapter of Romans, in the

third of Galatians, and other passages. But not one of them refers to this alleged fact of the loss of the greater part of the elect people from the national fellowship. The belief in the loss of the Ten Tribes out of the body of the Hebrews, and their present existence in some part of the world, may be traced, I think, to the general acceptance of certain "travellers' tales" in the mediæval literature of the Jews. A careful account of this curious romancing is given by Dr. A. Neubauer in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* for 1888-89. R. E. Thompson.

Israel, as a whole, is intact now, as it was before the split into two kingdoms. In other words, the Ten Tribes are not lost. This can be confirmed and established by direct scriptural evidence. Israel and Judah go into the same exile; into various provinces of the one great power, which at first constituted the Assyrian, then the Chaldean, and afterward the Persian Empire. Their common misery brings about a closer union of the descendants of Jacob. Their oppressors know of no tribal distinctions; and as the great monarchies undergo their successive changes, the fact of there having been two deportations of captive Israelites from the petty kingdoms of Israel and Judah seems to have been forgotten. The Persians knew of no distinction between Jews and Israelites, for Haman wished to destroy, not all the Judeans merely, but all the "Hebrews." In this "fused" state, as the seventy years of the later Captivity draw to a close, the people ripen for their return. The reason why there is no definite promise of return to the Ten Tribes after a fixed period is because they sinned in revolting. To have given one promise to them and another to the Judeans would have been contrary to the Divine purpose of unity. The revolted repent in captivity; in heart they return to their allegiance; and when the seventy years are ended, the captives go back as *one nation*. It is not contended that *all* went back together, but that some of all the tribes returned, and thus formed a representative Israel. Besides, the return is the reverse of the captivities. Judah is the later deposit; they have not struck so deep a root in exile as their brethren, hence they return first, and in greater numbers. Whereas the captives from the Ten Tribes were the earlier deposit; they have been many more years in captivity, they have consequently struck a deeper root; many of them have forgotten their own land (this is easy to understand, seeing these were never the truer Israelites); they have formed new homes and new interests in their exile. Many, again, of these

did not want to return, "they mingled with the heathen and learned their works." In other words, these were not the repentant and faithful Jews. They had no heart longings for Zion; and as they did not want God, He did not want them. They stayed behind; a few may have returned in later expeditions after the temple was rebuilt and national life was again in existence. Besides these two classes (the elect and the apostate), there were others who stayed behind in exile, and who, by keeping up their distinctive character as Israelites, and by sending contributions to Jerusalem, did good service among the heathen as a witnessing people, preparing the way for Christ. These, however, never became a "lost" people; the places of their habitation are clearly defined in the New Testament, where they are spoken of as "the dispersed among the Gentiles," and whom it is the custom to call "the Jews of the Dispersion." With these exceptions, *some of all the Twelve Tribes returned*, those tribes preponderating who had the greatest reverence and longing for the one sanctuary at Jerusalem, and for the preservation of the Israelitish ideal of unity; and naturally these were from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi; but that the God-fearing portion of the other tribes returned with them also there can be no well-grounded doubt. The purpose of God in sending His people into captivity is otherwise made of none effect. It is maintained that the Captivity was intended as a furnace of affliction wherein the disunited fragments of the nation would be melted into one again; and that on the return from captivity they did in fact return as one representative Israel—with old animosities gone with tribal distinctions all but obliterated; for of the combination of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, as a powerful faction, opposed to Judah, we hear no more. They, like the other tribes, after this lesson of affliction, become "the lost sheep of the house of Israel, whom the Good Shepherd afterward came to gather into His fold. The scriptural confirmation of this is an easy task. It was a matter of prophecy that the Twelve Tribes should return

and be reunited. The hope of this runs through the prophets. Isaiah chaps. 10 to 14 is a chief passage, especially 10 : 20 ; 11 : 12, 13 ; 14 : 1. So Jeremiah 3 : 12, 14, 18, 20-25. Also chap. 31 in its whole connection. Ezekiel, who took part in the Exile, 37 : 11, 12, 15, 22. These selected passages show that Israel returned to its own land, after the Exile had done its work upon them, a corporate nation.

Another proof is to be found in the Book of Ezra, which is emphatically the book of the return and restoration of Israel (both of Jews and Israelites) from captivity; the resettlement in Judah and Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple, and the ordering of the one fold, according to the law of Moses. The edict of Cyrus for their return is made to "*all Israel*." Also Ezra 1 : 1-4 ; 7 : 13. The first expedition of the Israelites to their own country was under the conduct of twelve leaders—Zerubbabel and Joshua with ten others (Ezra 2 : 2 ; Neh. 7 : 7). Twelve leaders of a returning band of Jewish exiles leads to the inevitable conclusion that these twelve men were leading back the representatives of the Twelve Tribes. The remnant that should be saved thus fulfilling the hopes of the prophets.

Abundant liturgical proofs also may be found in Ezra 6 : 17 ; 8 : 35, and in Ps. 107-147. And, finally, *all* New Testament references to the tribes of Israel are to the effect that the nation in the time of our Lord and His apostles was a united one. (See Luke 2 : 36 ; Matt. 19 : 28 ; Acts 26 : 7 ; James 1 : 1 ; Rev. 7 : 4-8.)

If the Ten Tribes did not go back with the other two, but have remained all this long time in an unknown land and unknown, then it must be confessed "they have no part in David," and are clean cut off altogether. But against such a conclusion the purpose of God, the prophecies, the whole tenor of Holy Scripture, and the nature of things are clearly opposed. It only needs an intelligent acquaintance with the whole history, and a spiritual insight into the true significance of the captivities, to refute the popular delusion about the lost Ten Tribes. *Anon.*

# KINGDOM OF JUDAH.

## Section 30.

REIGN OF REHOBOAM, SON OF SOLOMON, 17 YEARS.

1st to 15th of Jeroboam, of Israel.

2 CHRONICLES 11 : 1-23 ; 12 : 1-16.

11 : 1 AND when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam. But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren : return every man to his house ; for this thing is of me. So they hearkened unto the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam. And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah. He built even Beth-lehem, and Etam, and Tekoa, and Beth-zur, and Socoh, and Adullam, and Gath, and Mareshah, and Ziph, and Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah, and Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which are in Judah and in Benjamin, fenced cities. And he fortified the strong holds, and put captains in them, and store of victual, and oil and wine. And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong. And Judah and Benjamin belonged to him. And the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to him out of all their border. For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem : for Jeroboam and his sons cast them off, that they should not execute the priest's office unto the LORD : and he appointed him priests for the high places, and for the he-goats, and for the calves which he had made. And after them, out of all the

1 KINGS 12 : 21-24 ; 14 : 21-31.

12 : 21 AND when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel : return every man to his house ; for this thing is of me. So they hearkened unto the word of the LORD, and returned and went their way, according to the word of the LORD.

14 : 21 And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there : and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. And Judah did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD ; and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built them high places, and pillars, and Asherim, on every high hill, and under every green tree ; and there were also sodomites in the land : they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD drove out before the children of Israel. And it came to pass in the fifth year of king

tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the LORD, the God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the LORD, the God of their fathers. So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years : for they walked three years in the way of David and Solomon. And Rehoboam took him a wife, Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David, and of Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse ; and she bare him sons ; Jeush, and Shemariah, and Zatham. And after her he took Maacah the daughter of Absalom ; and she bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith. And Rehoboam loved Maacah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines : (for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines, and begat twenty and eight sons and threescore daughters.) And Rehoboam appointed Abijah the son of Maacah to be chief, *even* the prince among his brethren : for *he was minded* to make him king. And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his sons throughout all the lands

of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city : and he gave them victual in abundance. And he sought *for them* many wives.

**12 : 1** And it came to pass, when the kingdom of Rehoboam was established, and he was strong, that he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had trespassed against the LORD, with twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen : and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt ; the Lubim, the Sukkiim, and the Ethiopians. And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came unto Jerusalem. Now Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak. Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves ; and they said, The LORD is righteous. And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, They have humbled themselves ; I will not destroy them : but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants ; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house ; he took all away : he took away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. And king Rehoboam made in their stead shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard, that kept the door of the king's house. And it was so, that as oft as the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether : and moreover in Judah there were good things *found*. So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned : for Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there : and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. And he did that which was evil, because he set not his heart to seek the LORD. Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the histories of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, after the manner of genealogies ? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David : and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem : and he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house ; he even took away all : and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. And king Rehoboam made in their stead shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the captains of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house. And it was so, that as oft as the king went into the house of the LORD, the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber. Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah ? And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David : and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. And Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

*Introductory.* Having fully treated the separate history of Israel, we proceed to present a similar treatment of the remaining branch of the divided kingdom of Solomon. The history of the kingdom of Judah is most largely given in the Chronicles, which were probably written by Ezra soon after the return from the Captivity in Babylon. Then the newly gathered people, mainly Judahites or *Jews*, needed a fresh reminder of their *entire* history, with its many impressive lessons. In tracing the parallel progress of the two kingdoms, certain outline facts should be borne in mind from the outset. 1. They have the same starting-point—B.C. 975. 2. Israel lasts two hundred and fifty-four years and Judah three hundred and eighty-eight years. 3. Each kingdom has nineteen kings. 4. The kings of Israel came from eleven

distinct families. 5. Those of Judah all belonged to the family of David, thus fulfilling God's "pledge given as if by a covenant of salt, that the house of David should never perish." B.

The kingdom of Judah lasted three hundred and eighty-eight years, B.C. 975–587. The history of the kingdom of Judah is the history of a dynasty rather than of a nation—of a city rather than of a country. Its title reveals to us its strength as well as its weakness. The tribe of Judah, the city of Jerusalem, the family of David, had acquired too much fame during the preceding reigns to be easily lost. The lamp or torch of David was always burning, although it seemed at times on the verge of extinction. There was a pledge given as if by a covenant of salt, that the house of David should never perish (2 Chron. 13 : 5). *Stanley.*

PERIODS IN JUDAH'S HISTORY.	KINGS OF JUDAH.	LENGTH OF REIGNS.	PROPHETS.	KINGS OF ISRAEL.
I. First Religious Decline and First Religious Revival—about 86 years...	1 Rehoboam.	17 years.	Shemaiah, Iddo.	Jeroboam.
	2 Abijam.	3 ...		Jeroboam.
	3 Asa.	41 ...	Azariah, Hanani.	Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri
	4 JEHOShAPHAT.	25 ...	Jehu, Jahaziel.	Omri. Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram.
II. Second Decline and Second Revival—about 207 years.....	5 Jehoram.	8 ...		Jehoram.
	6 Ahaziah. (Athaliah.)	1 ... 6 ...		Jehoram. Jehu.
	7 Joash.	40 ...	{ Zechariah (son of Jehoiada).	Jehu, Jehoahaz.
	8 Amaziah.	29 ...	Hosea, Amos.	Joash, Jeroboam II.
	9 Uzziah (or Azariah)	52 ...	{ Joel, Zecha- riah II.	Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah.
	10 Jotham.	16 ...	Isalah, Micah.	Pekah.
	11 Ahaz. 12 HEZEKIAH.	16 ... 29 ...	Nahum.	Pekah, Hoshea. Hoshea.
III. Third Decline and Third Revival—about 88 years.	13 Manasseh. 14 Amon.	55 ... 2 ...		
	15 JOSIAH.	31 ...	{ Zephaniah, Jeremiah.	
	IV. Final Decline—about 23 years.....	16 Jehoahaz. 17 Jehoiakim. 18 Jehoiachin. 19 Zedekiah.	1/2 ... 11 ... 3 1/2 ... 11 ...	Habakkuk. Obadiah.

In a religious point of view, the history of the kingdom of Judah may be divided into four periods, as indicated in the above table. It is remarkable how closely the religious character of the several periods corresponded to that of the monarchs who sat upon the throne. Under Rehoboam and Abijam, religion underwent a decline, from which it began to recover in the reign of Asa; while under Jehoshaphat the revival was decided and complete. A second decline commenced with the reign of Jehoram, the son-in-law of Ahab and Jezebel, and went on through a long succession of reigns—the spiritual thermometer falling lowest in that of Ahaz. The darkest hour of night, however, was succeeded by the dawn; under Hezekiah, the son and successor of Ahaz, the firmament brightened again. With Manasseh a new decline, more terrible than any that had preceded, began; followed, in the days of his grandson, Josiah, by a new and most interesting revival. The sons and successors of Josiah were not like-minded with himself; the old corruptions broke out afresh; and with the awful catastrophe of the Babylonian Captivity, the glory departed from the kingdom of Judah. W. G. B.

*The history of the kingdom of Judah has a character essentially different from that of the kingdom of Israel. Though much smaller, especially after Idumea, the only one of the*



mountainous districts which at the disruption fell to the share of Judah, had gained its independence, it was still superior to the kingdom of Israel in *internal strength*. This resulted partly from its possession of the genuine sanctuary with its legitimate worship, its influential priesthood, and Levitical orders; and partly from its royal house, which, unlike most of the dynasties of the neighboring kingdom, had not been raised to the throne by revolution, but possessed the sanction of legitimacy and a settled succession, and was especially consecrated by the memory of its illustrious ancestor David, and the Divine promises vouchsafed to his race. Moreover, among the nineteen monarchs (not counting Athaliah) who occupied the throne three hundred and eighty-seven years, from Rehoboam till the fall of the State, there were at least some individuals distinguished for high administrative talents, in whom the ideal of the theocratic kingship was revived, such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah. Thus the kingdom gained a moral strength that prevented the wild spirit of insurrection and discord, by which the other kingdom was disturbed, from attaining anything like the same proportions. The opposition, indeed, between the natural inclinations of the people and the moral strictness of Jehovism could not but lead to conflicts here also; nay, the contrast between the two was all the sharper, because a syncretistic intermingling of heathenism and Jehovism could not be so easily effected—a circumstance which explains the fact, that when the former did get the upper hand in Judah, it appeared in a still grosser form than in the kingdom of Israel. By reason, however, of the firm foundation which the continuance of the legitimate theocratic authorities afforded to Jehovism in the State, there was no need of bloody revolutions to reinstate the latter in its rights, but only of *reformations*, and these were effected not so much by the energetic efforts of the prophets as by the kings themselves. Besides, since the preservation of the theocratic ordinances did not devolve in Judah exclusively upon the prophets, their position was different from that which they occupied in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. At times their agency was exercised in perfect harmony with that of the two other theocratic powers; and reformations of worship being repeatedly undertaken by the kings, they were able to limit themselves to the ministry of the word. The prophets, finding in Judah the basis afforded by existing theocratic institutions, were not under the necessity of establishing new props; and there is no sort

of evidence that *schools of the prophets*, or associations such as existed in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, were organized in Judah. In the historical notices of the kingdom of Judah we meet only with individual prophets, a succession of whom continues, with but inconsiderable gaps, down to the Captivity, and it was only around eminent prophets like Isaiah (cf. 8:16), and afterward Jeremiah, that small circles of disciples were gathered, in whom the word of God fell upon good ground, in the midst of a rebellious nation, and was transmitted to future generations. With respect to the *course of events* in the kingdom of Judah, a cursory glance presents a tolerably uniform alternation of apostasy from Jehovah and return to Him. Certain kings suffer idolatry to spring up; this finds support in the high places existing in different parts of the country, and such apostasy is followed by punishment in the calamities which then overtake the nation. Then arises again a pious king, who exerts himself to keep the people faithful to the legitimate sanctuary, and vindicates the authority of the legal worship, till at length, after repeated reformations, the apostasy and corruption becomes so great that judgment sets in without intermission. O.

**2 Chron. 11:1-4.** Rehoboam's preparation of a great army to recover the heritage of Solomon by conquest of the revolted tribes was countermanded by the word of the Lord at the mouth of the prophet Shemaiah, and the Divine command was instantly heeded by king and people. B.

**4.** The words of the prophet were addressed not only to the king but to the assembled warriors, and were imperative upon the latter—"Return every man to his house;" and, we are immediately told, "They hearkened therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart." There is no reason to suppose that they would have remained under arms after such a command, however much Rehoboam had wished them to do so. They obeyed the prophet, and he could not but do the same. *Kitto*.

That portion of the tribe of Dan which dwelt in their original lot (Josh. 19:40 sqq.), between Benjamin, Judah and Ephraim, belonged to Judah. A few Danite cities are mentioned (2 Chron. 11:10; 28:18) as pertaining to the kingdom of Judah; but since this tribe dwelt partly in the north, it may nevertheless be reckoned among the ten. Thus Rehoboam's army may correctly be spoken of (1 K. 12:23) as "*all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the*

people." Among the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah, mentioned (verse 17) as Rehoboam's subjects, were probably included members of other tribes also. And when to these are added the numerous emigrations from the northern kingdom into that of Judah in succeeding centuries (cf. 2 Chron. 15 : 9), it may well be said that among the *Jews*, which name now arose in the southern kingdom, *all Israel* was represented. The disruption of Israel was from this time irremediable ; in a short time, not reckoning the reigns of Ahab and Jehoshaphat and their immediate successors, the separated kingdoms took hostile positions with respect to each other, and at last consumed their strength in sanguinary wars. The external glory of the kingdom was at an end ; but prophecy never ceased to direct the expectation of the nation to the future reunion of the twelve tribes under one head of the house of David. *Oehler*.

**11-17.** Three years of peace followed. The only notable occurrence during this tranquil interval was the gradual exodus of the Levites from the northern kingdom, where they were subject to indignities, and their concentration within the territorial limits of Judah and Benjamin, where they were respected and honored. This exodus was followed by that of many pious Israelites, who disliked Jeroboam's religious innovations, and were attached to the worship of Jehovah, as established by David and Solomon. The northern kingdom was thus continually weakened and the southern one strengthened (2 Chron. 11 : 18-17). G. R.

Rehoboam's policy drew almost all the priesthood into his dominions of the nation, and brought in large accessions of population from the territory of the revolted tribes ; so that though his country, consisting only of the two southern tribes, was inferior in extent, and yet more in fertility and natural resources, it matched well the sister kingdom in the north, and during his reign and the reigns of his successors, he successfully warded off its enmity. "He fortified the strongholds and put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine. And in every several city he put shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong." So much he did for external defence. And to preserve internal order and tranquillity, and to prevent contention among his numerous sons—for it is recorded of him that he had twenty-eight—as well as to avert the danger of a disputed succession after his death, he separated them, "and dispersed all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin,

unto every fenced city : and he gave them victual in abundance." Surely, here was some good statesmanship and political sagacity. And thus it appears that Rehoboam, through the great folly with which he started in his public career, has left on his fame an indelible blot—was not altogether a simpleton or a trifier, nor altogether unworthy of his birth as the son of the wise King Solomon. *R. Hallam*.

**16.** To his new order of priests Jeroboam probably gave the consecrated lands and the right of tithes which the Levites had previously enjoyed, thus reducing the bulk of the old sacerdotal body to absolute penury. A fresh impetus was in this way given to the exodus which had already begun ; and the example of their sacerdotal guides being followed by many of the more godly among the Israelites. Jeroboam found the number of his own subjects continually diminishing, and the number of his rival's subjects increasing, through an emigration which it was almost impossible for him to stop, or even to confine within moderate limits by his own unassisted efforts. G. R.

**12 : 1.** *The effect of prosperity upon Rehoboam and his people.* He occupies the first three years of his reign of seventeen in fortifying Jerusalem and fifteen walled cities ; in reorganizing the government over the two tribes ; and in assigning homes to the large number of priests and Levites, and of families, exiled from the Ten Tribes by Jeroboam for loyalty to the worship of Jehovah. With this *establishment* of his throne came a sense of power and security, shared alike by king and people. Indulgence naturally followed with the decline of religious feeling, soon reaching the point of utter disobedience to the law of the Lord. Groves, with their abominations, high places and images, with their idolatries, were the natural and speedy outcome of their apostasy. Although forty-one years old when he began to reign, Rehoboam seems to have been extremely self-ignorant and weak. His foolish response to the representatives of the Ten Tribes, by which he repelled them and divided the kingdom of Solomon, clearly shows this. So does his ready yielding to the idolatrous tendencies of all surrounding nations, though helped, doubtless, by his Ammonite mother's training ; while his replacement of the golden shields with those of brass, to be used in mere personal display of kingly state and authority, also indicated a vain, weak character. B.

**2 Chron. 12 : 1-12.** The most important event in this history is told in fullest detail in the Book of Kings (14 : 22-24) ; its punishment

at the hand of God in the Book of Chronicles (12 : 2, 12). After the first three years of Rehoboam's reign a great change seems to have come over the religious aspect of the country. Rehoboam and Judah did not, indeed, openly renounce the worship of Jehovah. On the contrary, we find that the king continued to attend the house of the Lord in royal state, and that after the incursion of Shishak there was even a partial religious revival (verses 11, 12). Still the general character of this period was, that "Rehoboam forsook the law of Jehovah, and all Israel with him;" that "he did evil in that he did not set his heart on seeking Jehovah" (verses 1, 14), and, lastly, that "Judah did the evil in the sight of Jehovah, and provoked Him to jealousy (viewing the relation between the Lord and Israel as one of marriage, Num. 5 : 14—more than anything which their fathers had done by their sins which they sinned" (1 K. 14 : 22). These sins consisted in building *Bamoth*, or "high places"—*i.e.*, altars, on every high hill, and setting up in every grove *Mazzeboth*, or memorial-stones and pillars dedicated to Baal, and *Asherim*, or trunks of trees dedicated to Astarte (with all the vileness which their service implied). The Divine punishment was not long withheld. Once more it came in the course of natural causation, through the political motives which influenced Shishak, and led him to support Jeroboam. In the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign Shishak marched a large army of Egyptians, Lybians, Sukkiim ("tent-dwellers"? Arabs?), and Ethiopians, with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen, into Judea, and after taking the fenced cities along his route, advanced upon Jerusalem, where Rehoboam and his army were gathered. Once more the prophet Shemaiah averted a contest, which could only have ended in disaster. On showing them that the national danger, though apparently arising from political causes, was really due to their sin against Jehovah (verse 2), and that it was needless to fight, since, as they had been God-forsaking, they were now God-forsaken (verse 5), the king and his princes humbled themselves. Thereupon the Lord intimated through His prophet that He would "grant them deliverance for a little while," on condition of their submitting to Shishak. The reason for this, "that they may know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries," as well as the terms by which the promised deliverance was qualified, contained the most solemn warning of the ultimate consequences of apostasy. Yet the Divine forbearance continued other three

hundred and seventy years before the threatened judgment burst upon the nation. But at this time Jerusalem was spared. Voluntary submission having been made, Shishak entered the city, and contented himself with carrying away the treasures of the Temple and of the palace, including among the latter the famous golden shields used by Solomon's body-guard on state occasions, for which Rehoboam now substituted shields of brass. A. E.

It is to be carefully noted that, so long as king and people served the Lord, Shishak was held back from attacking them. Hence we understand why Judah receives earlier and greater stripes than Israel. It was Jeroboam made Israel to sin. It was Judah made Rehoboam to sin. The guilty people, accordingly, are punished by the invasion of their land and the spoliation of their treasure; the guilty king by the destruction of his house. And here again, let us observe, how significant that the chastisement should come from Egypt! Time was when God had punished the idolatries of Egypt through the instrumentality of the Jewish people (Ex. 7-14). Now the tables are turned, and Egypt is employed to avenge the idolatries of Judah. This was the first time that an Egyptian army had crossed their border—the first time, indeed, that the land had sustained the brunt of any invasion. It was the Sodomites and the like had drawn forth those swords from their scabbards. What a contrast between Exodus 14 and 1 Kings 14! Israel, who then "saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore," now feels the grip of Pharaoh at his throat, and the iron of Pharaoh in his soul.

*Hammond.*

2-4. *God's dealing with the transgressions of king and people.* Shishak, or Sheshonk, according to the monumental records inscribed upon the walls of the great temple of Karnak, was the first king of the twenty-second dynasty of Egypt. A list of one hundred and thirty-three countries, cities, and tribes ruled by or tributary to him, includes a large number of the cities of Palestine. Some of these were within the kingdom of Jeroboam, but they were cities of the Levites or old Caananites. But the supreme motive and ultimate impelling cause of this Egyptian invasion, lay in the mind of God. Like all human actions, there was connected with this of Shishak a *double thread* of motive and purpose—the one, superior and overruling, because Divine; the other (the human), free indeed, but overruled in its every detail of result. No clearer, more conclusive statement, in illustration of an *inerplicable fact*, can we find

than this: "Shishak came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the Lord." His army was a vast one, drawn from Egypt and the great countries on the west and south. And his progress was unhindered, and his triumph complete. The cities that Rehoboam had walled for defence were taken almost as soon as their walls had been built. And Jerusalem itself was occupied by the Egyptian host. B.

When David founded his empire his two powerful neighbors, Egypt and Assyria, were both in a state of decline. Assyria had fallen into the hands of unwarlike kings, who were unable to retain the conquests of their predecessors, even upon their immediate frontiers; while Egypt was divided among rival dynasties and rent with civil wars. Egypt, however, was the first to recover her strength. The monarchs of the twenty-second dynasty once more united the country under one rule, and Shishak or Sheshonk I. turned his arms against the cities of Palestine. The brief account given in 1 K. 14:25, 26, and the fuller history in these verses of his invasion of Judah and his capture of Jerusalem, are supplemented by his own record of it on the walls of the ruined temple of Karnak. *Sayce.*

In the Scriptures Shishak appears first in 1 K. 11:40, as then the king of Egypt to whom Jeroboam fled for protection from Solomon. This fact indicates a decisive change in the policy of the Egyptian court since Solomon took to wife the daughter of the reigning monarch. It suggests another dynasty, of other, not to say opposite sympathies and policy. In harmony with this we find that Shishak (the Sheshonk of the Egyptian monuments) was the founder of a new dynasty, the twenty-second. He was not on the best terms with Solomon, and readily took Jeroboam into his confidence and friendship. Naturally, therefore, he only waited for the favorable moment to make this formidable military campaign into Palestine in the interests of his friend Jeroboam. H. C.

Shishak, called Sheshen or Sheshonk on the monuments, and Sesonchis or Sesonchosis by Manetho, ascended the Egyptian throne about B.C. 980 or a little earlier, according to calculations based upon exclusively Egyptian data. He reigned twenty-one years, and toward the close of his reign made an expedition, which he has commemorated on the external wall of the great temple at Karnak. The mode of commemoration is by a representation of himself, and a list of the various cities, countries, and tribes conquered by him, or made tributary,

during the expedition. The number of the names was originally one hundred and thirty-three; but of these thirty-two are wholly and fourteen others partly illegible. Of the remaining eighty-seven, about fifty-five had been identified with more or less of probability, while above thirty still defy the comparative geographer. From the fifty-five identifications, many of which are quite certain, it appears that the list contains three classes of names, mainly grouped together—(1) Levitical and Canaanite cities of Israel; (2) cities of Judah; (3) Arab tribes lying to the south of Palestine. According to Mr. R.S. Poole's analysis of the inscription of Sheshonk at Karnak, it appears that the expedition was directed not only against the dominions of Rehoboam, but also against a number of Levitical and Canaanite cities within the territory of Jeroboam himself, and further against certain Arab tribes of the vicinity. The inference is, that Jeroboam obtained Sheshonk's aid in reducing Israelite cities that had declined to submit to him, and also in chastising Arab tribes on his borders which had given him trouble. G. R.

On the 14th of February, 1867, the writer and some friends, in one of their visits to Karnak, sought out this sculptured scene and record. Passing from the interior of the great Columnar Hall through a break in the south wall, the sculptures were found near the southwest corner. There were the colossal figures of a conqueror and of a divinity, and the Lilliputian figures of a multitude of captives, sculptured in *intaglio* on the exterior surface of the wall. Accompanying these was an explanatory record, containing the name of the king and the names of the various countries which he had subdued. No doubt exists concerning this representation, so far as is needful to identify it with King Shishak and his Syrian expedition mentioned in the Scriptures; and, although the hour of our visit was oppressively warm, it was no hardship to stand amid the fiery reflections of the sun from the temple wall and surrounding *débris*, before an inscription which must be accounted one of the most suggestive ever written by the finger of man. *N. C. Burt.*

**5, 6.** *God's admonitory message, and the responsive humiliation of the king and princes.* By the same prophet (Shemaiah) who had five years before forbidden Rehoboam to reconquer the ten rebelling tribes, the word of Jehovah is uttered to the king and chief men of Judah. The message is brief and pointed. Their sin was the cause of their calamities, and *this* was their sin: that they had *turned away from God*

—from His worship and His law. And this is the substance of all sin, the essence of transgression in every age and generation: *turning away from God, disregarding His worship, disobeying His law!* The charge uttered by the prophet is not denied. The conscience of the leaders and people acknowledged its truth. And the calamities which were already fallen upon them helped to make the voice of conscience clearer and its sting the sharper. So they humbled themselves in acknowledgment as brief and pointed as the charge: *The Lord is righteous!* As their sin relates solely to God, so their penitence refers only to Him. David's words of confession fitly express their meaning: *Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned; that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest.* This, too, is the substance of all true repentance in every age and generation: the return to God with self-accusation for disobedience, and full justification of God's right and merciful dealing.

**7, 8.** *Why and how God's yet severer discipline was withheld.* His wrath was not fully "poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak." By the same prophet they learned that God's mercy was interposed on account of their thus penitently humbling themselves before Him. But God would grave the lesson deeper on their souls, as we know they sadly needed. Therefore He left the nation subject to Shishak, and king and people were compelled to pay heavy tribute, even after the loss of all the treasures gathered by David and Solomon, stored in the Temple and palaces of Jerusalem.

A point of special instruction is suggested in the reason assigned by the Lord for Judah's enslavement to Shishak. It is that Judah may learn by actual experience whose is the easier, most desirable service—God's or the Egyptian monarch's. It was God's way, under the old and severer Covenant, of saying to Judah, "Return unto Me and take *My* yoke upon you, for it is easy; and *My* burden, for it is light!" Through experience only, of the contrast between sore bondage to a foreign tyrant and glad service willingly given to Himself, they would learn that obedience to God was far better. And thus Christ says to all, who have had enough of the sad experience of bondage to sinful self-indulgence, "Come unto Me, and exchange the burdening, wearing yoke of reigning sin for My light burdens and easy restraints!" B.

**7. They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them.**

Compare the repentance of Ahab (1 K. 21 : 27-29) and that of the Ninevites (Jonah 2 : 5-10), which produced similar revocations of Divine decrees that had been pronounced by the mouth of a prophet. B. C.

**8. May know My service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.** The history of life is made up of different services. Every man serves something. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" In the service of the world you are always dealing with uncertainties. The things of God are sure and forever. He who gives is the unchangeable Jehovah, who never recalls a gift, and all His gifts have in them eternity. In the service of the world nothing ever thoroughly satisfies; nothing meets all the aspirations of a man. In God's service a man has just what his soul wants. The Christian service of religion does not work up to get its great objects. It has them. It does not work for wages, for it has received what it wants as a gift. It works out a salvation which it has. The one service is a service of freedom, the other of bondage. It is bondage to serve where there is no affection. It is bondage to work for what you can get, and not even to be sure that you shall ever get it. But to feel that you are your Father's child, that His eye is looking at you and His hand holding you while you work—that is liberty. It is the same service with that of those servants who serve Him indeed in heaven. *J. Vaughan.*

**9-11.** *What Shishak took away, and Rehoboam substituted.* Five hundred shields of wood overlaid with gold, made under Solomon's direction, together with all the treasures gathered in the house of the Lord and in the king's house, were carried to Egypt. The shields were used for display on state occasions; and it would seem that the treasures were kept or used more for show than for actual advantage to the nation. So that the *shame* of the loss would be felt more than their deprivation of the treasure. For the shields, as they were required upon the occasional parade visitation of Rehoboam to the Lord's house, he had counterfeits made of brass, which answered the purpose quite as well.

**12.** *The sum of this story.* The outward form of humility, and the sincere though constrained confession and repentance of king and people, for the time turned away the severer visitations of God's righteous indignation. For David's sake, and His promise' sake, the Lord "would not destroy Rehoboam altogether."

*And also*, another equally strong good reason for God's forbearance, *there were good things in Judah!* There remained a true spiritual seed—many loyal souls were dispersed among the two tribes. All through the history of God's ancient people we see this fact outstanding, first announced in principle to Abraham pleading for the cities of the plain. And ever since the call of the Gentiles the evidence is as marked. And this is the fact that magnifies God's personal love to men: that *multitudes* of the hardened and guilty receive tokens of His *prolonged forbearance* by reason of the few godly souls that witness for Him, and seek the coming of His kingdom upon earth. B.

**13-16.** The lesson seems not to have been lost on Rehoboam and his people. "There were yet good things in Judah;" but the sum of the king's character is this: "He did evil, because he fixed not his heart to seek Jehovah" (verse 14). He died after a reign of seventeen years (verse 13), and was buried in the city of David. His acts were recorded by the prophet Shemaiah, by the seer Iddo, in his book of genealogies, and in the Chronicles of the kings of Judah. P. S.

Rehoboam's reign, after the retirement of Sheshonk, was uneventful. He continued to occupy the throne for twelve more years, and during this time was engaged in frequent if not in continual hostilities with Jeroboam (1 K. 14: 30; 2 Chron. 12: 15), but no important results followed, and it can only be said that the two kingdoms maintained their relative positions. In military strength they were not ill-matched, since, if Israel could bring more men into the field, the narrower limits of Judah made her able to concentrate her troops more rapidly, while the personal qualities of the men

of Judah and Benjamin placed them in the front rank of Hebrew warriors. Thus, notwithstanding the invasion of Sheshonk, and the loss of strength which it must have occasioned, the southern kingdom held its ground firmly, though it can scarcely have continued to maintain any hold over the alien States upon its borders, such as Philistia and Edom, which David had subjugated, but which, probably from the date of Sheshonk's invasion, recovered their independence.

Rehoboam, remembering the dreariness of his own idle youth, was careful to give his sons active employment. As they grew to manhood, he dispersed them among the various provincial towns, assigning to each a charge, and at the same time an establishment. The writer of Chronicles considers that, in so doing, he acted wisely (chap. 11: 23). The system which he adopted was certainly calculated to prevent, or minimize, jealousies among the princes, and to benefit their characters by giving them duties to perform, instead of making them idle hangers-on upon a court. Maachah survived her husband, and was queen-mother during the next two reigns. Her influence over the kingdom was altogether for evil, and we may, perhaps, ascribe much of the wrong conduct of Rehoboam to the sway which she exercised over him. Her leanings were altogether toward idolatry. Rehoboam's character was weak and irresolute. He seems to have had warm affections, and to have been capable of making good resolutions under good advice (11: 4; 12: 6); but he had no stability of purpose, and his last counsellor generally determined his actions. We are told that "he did evil, because he fixed not his heart to seek the Lord" (12: 14). G. R.

## Section 31.

### REIGN OF ABIJAH OR ABIJAM, THREE YEARS.

#### 18th to 21st of Jeroboam, of Israel.

2 CHRONICLES 13: 1-22.

**13: 1** IN the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah. **2** Three years reigned he in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Micaiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war be-

1 KINGS 15: 1-8.

**15: 1** NOW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat began Abijam to reign over Judah. Three years reigned he in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. And

3 tween Abijah and Jeroboam. And Abijah  
 4 joined battle with an army of valiant men  
 of war, even four hundred thousand chosen  
 men : and Jeroboam set the battle in array  
 against him with eight hundred thousand  
 chosen men, who were mighty men of val-  
 our. And Abijah stood up upon mount  
 Zemaraim, which is in the hill country of  
 Ephraim, and said, Hear me, O Jeroboam  
 and all Israel ; ought ye not to know that  
 the LORD, the God of Israel, gave the king-  
 dom over Israel to David for ever, even to  
 him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?  
 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant  
 of Solomon the son of David, rose up, and  
 rebelled against his lord. And there were  
 gathered unto him vain men, sons of Belial,  
 which strengthened themselves against Rehoboam  
 the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam  
 was young and tender-hearted, and could  
 not withstand them. And now ye think to  
 withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the  
 hand of the sons of David ; and ye be a great  
 multitude, and there are with you the golden  
 calves which Jeroboam made you for gods. Have ye not driven out the priests of the LORD,  
 the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the peoples  
 of *other* lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and  
 seven rams, the same may be a priest of *them that are* no gods. But as for us, the LORD is  
 our God, and we have not forsaken him ; and *we have* priests ministering unto the LORD, the  
 sons of Aaron, and the Levites in their work : and they burn unto the LORD every morning  
 and every evening burnt offerings and sweet incense : the shew-bread also *set they* in order  
 upon the pure table ; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every even-  
 ing : for we keep the charge of the LORD our God ; but ye have forsaken him. And, behold,  
 God is with us at our head, and his priests with the trumpets of alarm to sound an alarm  
 against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD, the God of your fathers ;  
 for ye shall not prosper. But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them :  
 so they were before Judah, and the ambushment was behind them. And when Judah looked  
 back, behold, the battle was before and behind them : and they cried unto the LORD, and the  
 priests sounded with the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout : and as the men  
 of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and  
 Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah : and God delivered them into their  
 hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter : so there fell down  
 slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men. Thus the children of Israel were brought  
 under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD,  
 the God of their fathers. And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him,  
 Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof, and Ephron with the  
 towns thereof. Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah : and the  
 LORD smote him, and he died. But Abijah waxed mighty, and took unto himself fourteen  
 wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters. And the rest of the acts of  
 Abijah, and his ways, and his sayings, are written in the commentary of the prophet Iddo.

REHOBAM reigned seventeen years, B.C. 975-958. His son Abijah (whose mother was Maachah, the granddaughter of Absalom) succeeded him in a reign of three years. With four hundred thousand men he utterly defeated Jeroboam, who had twice that number on the field. But it was not God's will that the Ten Tribes should be brought back to their allegiance to the throne of David. Nor did Abijah, though reproaching the Israelites with their rejection of Jehovah's worship, himself do anything toward restoring that worship in Judah. The *brief* reign of Abijah, whose purpose was to reconquer Israel, *may* be thus

accounted for in the *controlling* purposes of God. B.

Rehoboam's affection for Maachah caused him not only to designate Abijah, her eldest son (2 Chron. 11 : 20), as his successor, but to put him at a very early age in a position of authority over his brethren (verse 22), and to give him an establishment on a scale of Oriental magnificence. Abijah, we are told (verse 21), "waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters." He was probably of full age at his father's accession. G. R.

Jeroboam did not only survive Rehoboam, but he witnessed the accession of two other kings of Judah, Abijah and Asa. The reign of Abijah was very brief. Both in 1 K. 15 : 2 and in 2 Chron. 13 : 2 it is said to have lasted *three* years—an expression which must be understood according to this canon laid down by the rabbis, that the commencement of a year in the reign of a king is to be reckoned as a full year. Thus, as Abijah ascended the throne in the eighteenth (1 K. 15 : 1) and Asa in the twentieth (verse 9) year of Jeroboam's reign, it follows that the former actually reigned only somewhat over two years. It is stated that "he walked in all the sins of his father," and that "his heart was not perfect with Jehovah his God." These two statements are not explanatory of, but supplementary to, each other. We know that Rehoboam had not abolished the service of Jehovah, but that, by its side, a spurious worship had been tolerated, if not encouraged, which, in the view of Holy Scripture, was equal to idolatry. In this matter Rehoboam had not only followed the example of his father Solomon, during his later years, but greatly increased the evil which had then begun. A similar remark applies to the reign of Abijah, as compared with that of Rehoboam. That the idolatry of the reign of Rehoboam had grown both worse in character and more general in practice under that of Abijah, appears from the notices of the reformation instituted by his successor, Asa. The former circumstance is implied in the terms by which the idolatry of that period is described (2 Chron. 14 : 3, 5), and by the circumstance that "the queen-mother" (Maachah, Abijah's mother and Asa's grandmother), who under Abijah held the official rank of *Gevirah*, "Queen" (the modern *Sultana Valide*), had made and set up "a horror for Asherah"—some horrible wooden representation, equally vile and idolatrous in its character. Again, that idolatry had become more widely spread, and that its hold was

stronger, we infer from the fact that, despite Asa's example, admonitions, and exertions (2 Chron. 14 : 4, 5), "the high places did not cease" (1 K. 15 : 14). This progressive spiritual decline under the reigns of Solomon, Rehoboam, and Abijah was so marked as to have deserved the removal of the family of David from the throne, had it not been for God's faithfulness to His covenant promises (1 K. 15 : 4, 5).

**2. Chron. 13 : 4-12.** The two armies met at the boundary of the two kingdoms, though, as we judge, within the territory of Israel. They camped in close proximity, only separated by Mount Zemaraim, a height to the east of Bethel, and some distance north of Jericho, forming part of the ridge known as "Mount Ephraim," which stretched from the plain of Esdraelon southward. From this height Abijah addressed the army of Israel just before the battle began, in the hope of securing their voluntary submission, or at least weakening their resistance. Ignoring all that told against himself, Abijah tried to impress on his opponents that right was wholly on his side. In language full of irony he set before them their weakness, as the necessary result of their apostasy from Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and of their adoption of a worship neither conformable to their ancient faith nor even respectable in the sight of men. Lastly, he loudly protested that, since Judah had gone to war under the leadership of Jehovah and in the manner appointed by Him, Israel was really fighting against Jehovah, the God of their fathers, and could not expect success. Whatever hollowness there may have been in this profession on the part of Abijah, it was at least the true war-cry of Israel which he raised. It found an echo in the hearts of his followers. A. E.

Jeroboam, wholly untouched by it, made the best disposition of his troops that was possible ; his troops neither deserted nor relaxed in their efforts on account of the invitation addressed to them. Such was the Israelite preponderance in numbers, that it was found possible to send a large detachment to the rear of the Jewish camp, and then to make simultaneously a double attack, from the front and from behind (verses 18, 14). The men of Judah resisted bravely, but were in great distress, when the aid of God being implored with great earnestness amid the trumpet blasts of the priests, suddenly the tide of battle turned—Judah was successful, and Israel was put to flight (verses 15, 16). A terrible carnage followed. According to the existing text, the slain on the part of the Israelites amounted to five hundred thou-



sand men ; but it is generally agreed that the original reading in this place was probably fifty thousand. Even this was an enormous loss ; and we can well understand its having led on to the conquest of several Israelite towns, as Bethel, Jeshanah, and Ephraim, which passed for a time under the dominion of Judah (verse 19). G. R.

**17. Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter.** There is nothing in the original to indicate that this slaughter was all on one day. The writer is probably compressing into a few words the circumstances of the whole war. **There fell down slain.** The word translated "slain" means strictly "pierced," and will include both the killed and the wounded. It is translated by "wounded" in Lam. 2 : 12. B. C.

**19.** Notwithstanding this decisive success, Abijah was too well advised to pursue his original design of reducing the Ten Tribes, and was content to re-establish his authority over certain border towns and districts, which had originally belonged to Judah or Benjamin, but

which Jeroboam had found means to include in his portion of the divided kingdom. *Kitto.*

**1 K. 15 : 1. Abijam.** The LXX adds "son of Rehoboam." The name is *Abijah* in 2 Chron., and, comparing with other names of like formation, that appears the more correct. *Lumby.*

**5.** Many sins are registered of David, as well as this matter of Uriah ; yet, as if all these were nothing in comparison of this one, this one alone is put in by the Holy Ghost, and so inserted as an exception in the testimony which we find given of him in the passage before us. "He turned not aside from any thing," etc.—that is, he turned not aside so foully and so contemptuously, so presumptuously and so provokingly, in any other thing as he did in that business of Uriah. All his ignorances and negligences, inconsiderations and infirmities, are passed over in silence ; only this great presumptuous sin standeth up as a pillar or monument erected to his perpetual shame in that particular, by which all succeeding generations might take warning and example. *Bp. Sanderson.*

## Section 32.

### REIGN OF ASA, FORTY-ONE YEARS.

#### 21st of Jeroboam to 3d of Ahab, of Israel.

##### 2 CHRONICLES, CHAPS. 14, 15, 16.

**14 : 1** So Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David, and Asa his son reigned in his stead : in his 2 days the land was quiet ten years. And Asa did that which was good and right in 3 the eyes of the LORD his God ; for he took away the strange altars, and the high places, and brake down the pillars, and hewed 4 down the Asherim ; and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. 5 Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the sun-images : and the kingdom was quiet before him. 6 And he built fenced cities in Judah : for the land was quiet, and he had no war in those years ; because the LORD had given him 7 rest. For he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about them walls, and towers, gates, and bars ; the land is yet be-

##### 1 KINGS 15 : 9-24.

**9** AND in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Asa to reign over Judah. And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem : and his mother's name was 11 Maacah the daughter of Abishalom. And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of 12 the LORD, as did David his father. And he put away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had 13 made. And also Maacah his mother he removed from being queen, because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah ; and Asa cut down her image, and burnt it 14 at the brook Kidron. But the high places were not taken away : nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect with the LORD all his 15 days. And he brought into the house of the LORD the things that his father had dedicated, and the things that himself had dedi- 16 cated, silver, and gold, and vessels. And

fore us, because we have sought the LORD our God ; we have sought him, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built 8 and prospered. And Asa had an army that bare bucklers and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand ; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand : all these were 9 mighty men of valour. And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an army of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots ; and he came unto Mar- 10 shah. Then Asa went out to meet him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of 11 Zephathah at Mareshah. And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, there is none beside thee to help, between the mighty and him that hath no strength : help us, O LORD our God ; for we rely on thee, and in thy name are we come against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God ; 12 let not man prevail against thee. So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and 13 before Judah ; and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar : and there fell of the Ethiopians so many that they could not recover themselves ; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host ; and 14 they carried away very much booty. And they smote all the cities round about Gerar ; for the fear of the LORD came upon them : and they spoiled all the cities ; for there was 15 much spoil in them. They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep in abundance and camels, and returned to Jerusalem.

15 : 1 And the spirit of God came upon 2 Azariah the son of Oded : and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin : the LORD is with you, while ye be with him ; and if ye 3 seek him, he will be found of you ; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for long seasons Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and with- 4 out law : but when in their distress they turned unto the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought 5 him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, 6 nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city : for God did vex 7 them with all adversity. But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack : for your work 8 shall be rewarded. And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominations out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from the hill country of Ephraim ; and he renewed 9 the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and them that sojourned with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon : for they fell to him out of Israel, in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God 10 was with him. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the 11 fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they sacrificed unto the LORD in that day, of the spoil 12 which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. And they entered

there was war between Asa and Baasha king 17 of Israel all their days. And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go 18 out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants : and king Asa sent them to Benhadad, the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, *There is* a league between me and thee, between my father and thy father : behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold ; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart 20 from me. And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and 'Dan, and Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. 21 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, 22 and dwelt in Tirzah. Then king Asa made a proclamation unto all Judah ; none was exempted : and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded ; and king Asa built therewith Geba of Benjamin, and Miz- 23 pah. Now the rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? But in the time of his old age he 24 was diseased in his feet. And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father : and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

into the covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul ; and that whosoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman. And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath : for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire ; and he was found of them : and the LORD gave them rest round about. And also Maacah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from being queen, because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah ; and Asa cut down her image, and made dust of it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron. But the high places were not taken away out of Israel : nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days. And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels. And there was no more war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

**16 : 1** In the six and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, *There is* a league between me and thee, as *there was* between my father and thy father : behold, I have sent thee silver and gold ; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me. And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel ; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease. Then Asa the king took all Judah ; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded ; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah. And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and hast not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubim a huge host, with chariots and horsemen exceeding many? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly ; for from henceforth thou shalt have wars. Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in the prison house ; for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people the same time. And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And in the thirty and ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet ; his disease was exceeding great : yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign. And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had hewn out for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kind of *spices* prepared by the apothecaries' art : and they made a very great burning for him.

#### REIGN OF ASA.

*Forty-one Years, 21st of Jeroboam to 8d of Ahab, of Israel.*

2 CHRONICLES, CHAPS. 14-16 ; 1 KINGS 15 : 9-24.

KING ABIJAH reigned but three years ; but his son ASA, who succeeded him, reigned forty-one years, and beheld the close of the reign of Jeroboam in Israel, and the commencement of that of Ahab—so that this one reign in the house of David covered the entire reigns of five and parts of the reigns of two kings in Israel—seven in all, including four different families or dynasties. Jeroboam was on the throne of Israel when Asa succeeded to that of Judah.

His son Nadab then became king ; and in the second year of his reign was put to death, with all his father's house, by Baasha of Issachar, who then mounted the throne, and reigned twenty-four years. He fixed his residence at Tirzah, and was succeeded by his son Elah, who, in the second year of his reign, was murdered, with all his family, by Zimri. On hearing this, the army elected their general, Omri, as king, and marched to Tirzah against Zimri, who had there assumed the crown. He made no resistance, but fled to the harem, which he set on fire, and perished in the flames. In the mean time, some of the people had made Tibni king ; but this party was at length put down, and Omri was generally recognized as king.

He built Samaria, which henceforth became the capital of Israel; and, after a reign of twelve years, left the throne to his son Ahab, whose reign fills a large portion of sacred history. There can be no doubt that Asa's long and mainly prosperous reign, while Israel was torn by internal factions and revolutions, and stained with the blood of fallen princes massacred by the successful competitors for the perilous crown, tended much to consolidate the strength of Judah, and to raise it to that equality with the rival kingdom, which might not in the first instance have appeared feasible when the great disproportion of territory is considered. *Kitto*.

The first ten years of Asa's reign were occupied with the reformation of worship, and the strengthening of defended cities. Then followed the invasion of Judah by Zerah and the utter overthrow of the Egyptian, through the intervention of Jehovah in response to Asa's trustful prayer. For twenty-five years king and people had the Lord's blessing of "rest round about." Then Asa was threatened by Baasha king of Israel. And then Asa's long untried faith failed utterly. Like the failures of all the good or godly in both Testaments, Asa's defection occurred at the very point of his previous excellence. He had trusted in God's power only, when his kingdom was actually thronged by foes. Now, when merely threatened by the comparatively feeble power of Baasha, he deliberately turns away from his Divine deliverer. He forsakes God, and puts his trust in that heathen king who was now the natural enemy of both Israel and Judah, and the power most to be dreaded. And though the result of his humiliating appeal to Benhadad was successful, yet that success wrought only an increasing unbelief in Asa's heart. So when God's prophet came to him with God's warning reproof, Asa dared to imprison the messenger for his fidelity. And this cloud seems to settle upon Asa's faith in the six closing years of his reign. Instead of seeking from God the healing of his disease, he resorted to heathen healers. But with all these failures and frailties of his closing years, his character and reign still stand among the wisest and best in Judah's history.

**2 Chron. 14:1.** *Asa succeeds Abijah.* We meet for the first time the beautiful expression, *slept with his fathers*. The figure of sleep, as meaning death, is common to both Testaments, and is obviously suggestive of resurrection and another life. Somewhere about Mount Zion, the loftiest of three or four eminences included

in Jerusalem (on the southwest), were the royal sepulchres. All the kings of Judah, save three (Ahaz, Jehoram and Joash), were buried here. Asa's reign lasted forty-one years. For ten years from its commencement peace prevailed, and the people had rest and prosperity. And the reason is assigned in verses 2-5. B.

**The land was quiet ten years.** The great blow struck by Abijah, his alliance with Syria, and the rapid succession of sovereigns in Israel during the earlier part of Asa's reign, would naturally prevent any disturbance of the peace on the part of the northern kingdom. B. C.

**2-5.** *Asa destroys idol-altars, and restores the law and worship of Jehovah.* The scriptural expressions commonly employed respecting both good and bad kings are to be interpreted by the recorded facts of their reigns. It is said: "Asa did what was good and right," etc.; and (1 K. 15-14), "Asa's heart was perfect with the Lord." The meaning is, that, in the main, and as compared with others, he was loyal to Jehovah. Yet Asa failed in one vital matter that demanded reformation. He destroyed idol-altars, brake down idol-images of metal and stone, cut down the so-called sacred trees, and took away the high places (hill-tops) consecrated to idolatry. But he failed to take away the high places disobediently set apart for the worship of Jehovah. He did not require the people to make the Temple at Jerusalem their one place of worship, and so re-enthroned Jehovah in His own dwelling-place. Yet he did everything beside; he "commanded Judah to seek the Lord, and to do the law and the commandment." And God rewarded him and his complying people with quiet and prosperity.

Suggestions recurring at this point are: 1. That God only gives peace and prosperity. 2. That He notes and rewards even an imperfect service which proceeds from a heart in the main loyal. 3. That the loyal heart should honestly search out and prayerfully seek to have disclosed its own points of imperfection. B.

**1 K. 15:13.** Maachah, the granddaughter of Absalom, had been the leading spirit of the court during two reigns. As his favorite wife, she had directed the religious policy of Rehoboam; and as his mother, she had exercised a complete domination over his successor, her son, Abijah. A devotee of the Syro-Phœnician religion, she had established her own shrine of Astarte worship in Jerusalem, and had erected in it an idolatrous emblem, probably of a sensuistic character (1 K. 15:13). Asa "destroyed

this idol and burnt it by the brook Kidron." Maachah herself he deprived of all authority, perhaps removing her from the court over which she had so long exercised a baleful influence. He in this way got rid of a centre of religious corruption which, unless removed, would have vitiated all his efforts after reform, and have afforded a rallying-point for the heathenizing party, against which it would have been most difficult to struggle. G. R.

**3 Chron. 14:6-8.** *Asa rebuilds the walls of fenced cities, and organizes an army.* He employs the "rest that the Lord had given" in strengthening the defences of the chief cities of Judah. These cities had been taken and rendered defenceless by the occupying hosts of Shishak. They were now open to attack on the north by Israel and on the south by Egypt. Asa's act involved another attack from the latter; and the completion of his great work of defence was probably followed by the withholding of the tribute money to Egypt. This was doubtless done with the Divine approval. Besides this, while the land had rest through God's favor, and while the fortifications were being constructed around the larger cities, the king had constructed a vast military organization of the entire people. This was to constitute a living breastwork of defence, when needed, in behalf of the nation. Of spearmen there were three hundred thousand in Judah; and of bowmen, two hundred and eighty thousand in Benjamin. This military preparation also seems to have been approved of God.

A fourth suggestion: That the period of health and prosperity is the fit time to prepare for sickness and adversity—emphatically the period of preparation for the *end of life*, and for that which follows, the fixed estate of the enduring life to come.

**9, 10.** *The host of Zerah set in array against the army of Asa.* In the tenth year of Asa's reign the expected invasion from Egypt took place. By a long career of prosperity had God prepared His people for the conflict, which He Himself had delayed. Zerah's host of a million men and three hundred chariots mainly consisted of mercenaries of adjacent nations or conscripts taken from tributary peoples—the largest collected force of which we read in Scripture. Mareshah was one of the cities fortified by Rehoboam and refortified by Asa. It lay twenty-five to thirty miles southwest from Jerusalem, in the low country of Judah. B.

The Egyptian monuments enable us to picture the general disposition of Zerah's army. The chariots formed the first corps, in a single

or double line; behind them, massed in phalanxes, were heavy armed troops; probably on the flanks stood archers and horsemen in lighter formations. Zerah retired from before Mareshah toward the plain, that he might use his chariots and horsemen with effect, instead of entangling them in the narrow valleys leading toward Jerusalem. From the prayer of Asa we may judge that when he came upon the invading army he saw its hugeness, and so that as he descended through a valley it lay spread out beneath him. Asa marching down a valley must have attacked in heavy column. His spearmen of Judah must have formed this column. Each bank of the valley would have been occupied by the Benjamite archers. No doubt the Ethiopian, confident in his numbers, disdained to attack the Hebrews, or clear the heights, but waited in the broad valley. R. S. Pool.

**9. Zerah the Ethiopian.** Zerah the Ethiopian is probably Usarken (Osorkon) II., the third king of Egypt after Shishak, according to the Egyptian monuments. The three root letters of the Hebrew name Zerah, *z, r,* and *ch*, represent fairly enough the three main consonants of the Egyptian word Usarken. And Osorkon II. may have been by birth an Ethiopian, for he was the son-in-law, not the son, of the preceding monarch, and reigned in right of his wife. B. C.

**11. The trustful prayer of Asa.** This is a wonderful prayer—wonderful for its comprehensiveness and completeness, its boldness and simplicity—under the circumstances in which it was uttered. In it God is everything and man nothing. Resting implicitly upon this fact, its twofold plea shows a most absolute faith that His omnipotence is with them and for them. "Help us, for *in Thy name, resting on thee*, we go against this multitude!" Help us, for "Thou art *our God!* Let not man *prevail against THEE!*" Against *Thee*, not against *us*, boldly assuming that God's honor is involved. Nothing but honest, invincible faith would conceive or dare to express such an appeal. And that it *was* faith, and that its conclusions were authorized, is proven by the issue. The appeal was heard and answered. And the very record in its terms seems to respond to the great fact of the prayer. Not Asa's army, but "the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah." The fleeing host were pursued, and vast spoil scattered in their flight, for full twenty miles. For three centuries Egypt (the *southern* power of Old Testament history and prophecy) attempted no

further invasion into the country of Jehovah's people.

This wonderful prayer and its wonderful success supremely magnifies God's power. It exemplifies *a supremely and utterly appropriating faith in God's willingness to use His power for those that, doing their utmost, still wholly rest on Him.* And the result pledges God's help and a successful issue in every earnest conflict with spiritual foes to such implicit faith, to such absolute casting upon Him, as the one whose honor is chiefly involved, the actual issue. B.

Asa knew he was in himself helpless, and he knew where to seek an all-sufficient Helper, and he desired to know no more. In this he rested—"We rest on Thee." This resting on God was both a cause and an effect. That he was enabled so to rest with undisturbed mind on God was one of the grounds on which he expected help—"for we rest on Thee;" and so far it was a cause. But the capacity of enjoying this rest, in leaning so entirely upon the Lord, was an inevitable effect of the previous convictions which he had reached of his own helplessness, and of the boundless sufficiency of his Helper. These things belong to the life of faith, and are essentially the same, whether they have regard to our defence against the innumerable adversaries who disturb or threaten our bodily repose, or the spiritual enemies, within us and without us, that bring danger to our souls. In either case, perfect love to God and perfect trust in Him, which trust is essential to love, gives rest—casts out all fear and doubt. Because Asa had attained to the state of "rest on God," by which all these privileges became his—he could say, "In Thy name we go against this multitude." This was his might. In this might he went, and he overcame. And it was because, feeling his own weakness, knowing where help was to be found, relying, resting upon that help and in that reliance, and in no other, going forth to oppose the Cushan host, that he was entitled and authorized to regard the cause as the Lord's own, and to say, "O Lord, Thou art our God, let not man prevail against Thee." *Kitto.*

*A model of prayer in an emergency.* It is made up of four fragments, each of which teaches us a fundamental element in the spirit of prayer in such an exigency. First, prayer in emergencies *should be founded on a strong faith in God's independence of human resources and methods of judgment.* Hear the stricken monarch, as he kneels beneath the weight of a kingdom: "Lord, it is nothing to Thee to help, whether with many or with them that

have no power." This goes to the heart of the case. Nothing else equals the situation. Are there not, in the lives of us all, emergencies in which our deliverance may depend on our realizing to our faith the principle that God is independent of the resources which decide human judgment? In certain extreme hours, very much may depend on the depth of our faith in this. Our own courage may depend on it. Our power to energize others may depend on it. Our power with God may depend on it. We need to feel that prayer may command improbable results, because it commands supernatural resources.

The example before us suggests, as a *second* element in believing prayer in emergencies, *a profound sense of the inadequacy of all other sources of relief but God.* We need to feel that we are shut in to God, and God only. "Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest in Thee." We are shut up to the arm of God. Help, Lord, or we perish. This familiar element in the spirit of prayer, emergencies force upon our thought. Often Divine providence seems to second the procedure of Divine grace by leaving us in a great emergency till we feel this. Deliverance is slow in coming. Prayer is not answered in a breath. The trial gathers intensity. The crisis deepens. The fire waxes hot. The object seems to be to quicken in the soul the sense of God as a reality because He is felt to be a necessity. Ruin here, ruin there, ruin everywhere except in the one thought that there is a God. Intense conceptions of the reality of God come to some minds in no other way than through this secret alliance of providence and grace in the discipline. The needed convictions have to be burned in by fiery trial. But when the end is gained, when God becomes an infinite fact, when we become content to go fearless into solitude with God, to cast everything upon God, to rest in God, then believing prayer wells up sweet and fresh from the heart, and flows out in glad assurance from the lips. Then relief, success, conquest, is not far off.

Prayer in emergencies involves a *third* element. It is *a profound identification with God.* "In Thy name we go against this multitude." The battle is not ours, but God's. Our interests are lost in God's interests. This is the province of believing prayer in emergencies, to lift us up and out from our petty selves, and so unite us with God that our interests are His because His interests have become ours. Our will is His because His will has been accepted as ours. Then prayer becomes but a prophecy of His decree. Its success is a foregone con-

clusion. While we are speaking, the answer is on our own lips. One design, doubtless, of great and crushing emergencies, is to help us up to this summit of identification with God, by driving us up the rocky steep that leads thither.

*One other phase of prayer in such emergencies, suggested by the fragment of biography before us, is a hearty recognition of God's ownership of us. "O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee." This conception of prayer in critical exigencies fills up the Christian idea of it to the brim. We belong to God. Whatever concerns us concerns Him. Our sorrow is His sorrow. Our joy is His joy. If it is best for us that we be delivered, it is as much to God as to us that He shall send deliverance. No wedge can be driven between, to separate Him from us, His interests from ours. The sacredness and eternity of Divine ownership are pledged to our success. By the right of creation we belong to God. By the right of faithful and undying friendship we belong to God. By the right of eternal redemption we belong to God. By the right of purchase with the blood of Christ we belong to God. Will God desert His own with such rights as these? Phelps.*

**12. The Ethiopians fled.** The defeat of Zerah is one of the most remarkable events in the history of the Jews. On no other occasion did they meet in the field and overcome the forces of either of the two great monarchies between which they were placed. It was seldom that they ventured to resist, unless behind walls. Shishak, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Ptolemy I., were either unopposed or only opposed in this way. On the one other occasion on which they took the field—which was under Josiah against Necho—their boldness issued in a most disastrous defeat. Now, however, under Asa, they appear to have gained a complete and most glorious victory over the entire force of Egypt, or of Ethiopia wielding the power of Egypt. The results which follow are most striking. The southern power cannot rally from the blow, but rapidly declines, and for above three centuries makes no further effort in this direction. Assyria grows in strength, continually pushes her arms further, and finally, under Sargon and Sennacherib, penetrates to Egypt itself. All fear of Egypt as an aggressive power ceases; and the Israelites learn instead to lean upon the Pharaohs for support (2 K. 17:4; 18:21). Friendly ties alone connect the two countries; and it is not till B.C. 609 that an Egyptian force

again enters Palestine with a hostile intention. B. C.

**13.** Such an appeal could not be in vain. In the significant language of Holy Scripture it was "Jehovah" who "smote" the Ethiopians, and "Asa and the people that were with him" only "pursued them." Far away to Gerar, three hours southeast from the border-city, Gaza, continued the chase amid unnumbered slain, and still the destroying sword of Jehovah was before His host, and His fear fell upon all the cities round about. To wrest the hostile cities of the Philistines and to carry away much spoil was only one sequence. Henceforth Egypt ceased to be a source of terror or of danger, and full three hundred and thirty years passed before its army was again arrayed against Judah. A. E.

**15:1-15.** These events followed immediately upon the great victory of Asa's army over Zerah and the Ethiopian invaders. As that victory had been preceded by prayerful trust in God, so it is now followed by the obedient consecration of the people to Jehovah, who had answered their prayer with so complete a deliverance. But in order to secure their renewed consecration, God had inspired the prophet Azariah to meet the returning victorious king and army with His earnest exhortation. In Jehovah's name the prophet had recalled their neglect of His worship, and the consequent distress and calamities which He had suffered to come upon the nation. But he assures them that the Lord would return with abundant favors if they would return to Him with sincere worship and faithful service. The result of this Divine exhortation with promise is here recounted. B.

**Ch. 16, 1-7.** The *Spirit of God* came upon the prophet (verse 1), both to instruct him what he should say, and to enable him to say it with clearness and boldness. *The Lord is with you, while you be with Him.* This is both a word of comfort, that those who keep close to God shall always have His presence with them, and also a word of caution, "He is *with you, while you be with Him*, but no longer; you have now a signal token of His favorable presence with you, but the continuance of it depends upon your perseverance in the way of your duty." "If ye seek Him, He will be found of you. Sincerely desire His favor and aim at it, and you shall obtain it. Pray, and you shall prevail. He never said, nor ever will, *Seek ye Me in vain.*" But if you forsake Him and His ordinances, He will certainly forsake you. Upon this He grounded His exhortation to prosecute

the work of reformation with vigor (verse 7); *Be strong, for your work shall be rewarded.* H.

**8. Removal of idols and restoration of the Temple worship.** In the previous chapter we have an account of Asa's endeavor to take away idolatry by the removal of images and high places. Afterward, during Asa's reign, we read of idolatrous worship as still continued; while his successors also renewed from time to time this same work of endeavoring to extirpate the worship of idols. The fact is, and it needs to be remembered throughout this history, that idolatry was already so deeply rooted in the habits of the people and so strongly entrenched in an ignorant conviction and an instinctive feeling, that it kept springing up afresh all over the land, in spite of all efforts of the best of Judah's kings to extirpate it. It never was destroyed out of Israel or Judah until the captivities. But after the Return from Babylon, idolatry was never known among the Jews. That severe discipline of Jehovah, the exile and the bondage of seventy years, avowedly visited upon His people because they *would have other gods beside Him*, fully accomplished its design.

Asa now adds to his fresh endeavor to "put away the abominable idols of Judah and Benjamin," the repair of the great altar of burnt-offering, and the renewal of worship to Jehovah by the appointed sacrifices upon it. This altar, made by Solomon sixty years before, stood before the Temple proper, immediately in front of the lofty porch. And this double act of Asa suggests a point of personal instruction—viz., that the fitting and necessary condition of return and right approach to God is the casting down of all idolatry, of self, of the world, or of the creature; and the preparation of the heart, God's altar, for every demanded sacrifice and service. But all this, in us, demands the joint-working of the Almighty Spirit, always ready to *work in* those who seek to work out their salvation. B.

**Words and prophecy.** Carefully examined, verses 2-7 contain alike an address and a prophecy. For it were a mistake to suppose that the picture which Azariah drew of Israel's sin and its consequence in verses 3, 5 and 6 was only that of the far past in the time of the Judges, of the religious decline under Jeroboam and Abijah, or even of their future apostasy and its punishment. *All these* were included in what the prophet set before the people. And not only so, but his words extended beyond Judah and applied to all Israel, as if the whole people were viewed as still

united and ideally one in their relation to the Lord. Accordingly, it deserves special notice, that neither in verse 3 nor in verse 5 any verb is used, as if to indicate the general application of the "prophecy." But its present bearing, alike as regarded Judah's sin and repentance, and God's judgment and mercy, was an earnest call to carry on and complete the good work which had already been begun (verse 7). And king and people hearkened to the voice of God through His prophet. Again and more energetically than before, the religious reformation was taken in hand. The idol "abominations" were removed, not only from Judah and Benjamin, but from the conquered cities of the north, and the great altar of burnt-offering in the Temple was repaired. The earnestness of this movement attracted the pious laity from the neighboring tribes (verse 9), and even led those of Simeon (in the far south) who, apparently, had hitherto sympathized with the northern kingdom, as they shared their idolatry (cf. Amos 4:4; 5:5; 8:14), to join the ranks of Judah. A. E.

**9, 10. Gathering of Judah and Benjamin at Jerusalem.** Asa had taken courage from the words of Divine promise spoken by the prophet of Jehovah, following as they did so marvelous an interposition of deliverance from the Egyptian host. He had decreed and sought to accomplish the overthrow of idol worship, and restored the great altar, worn by long disuse and neglect. Now he gathers a great assembly of the two tribes, and of many besides from the adjoining tribes of the kingdom of Israel, around the Temple of God in Jerusalem. In this massing of the people came representatives from every family and household. As the whole history informs us, these assemblages, originally commanded by Moses in connection with the three great Feasts, were specially ordered by the kings in periods of national interest or exigency. They were a means of uniting the whole people with king and nobles in any form of national expression or action that was desirable or necessary. In the mention of the "strangers out of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon" (the adjacent tribes under Jeroboam's rule), who comprised a fresh and "abundant" migration from the other kingdom, the reason of their coming is assigned. *They saw that the Lord was with Asa!* A second practical suggestion here: that God's manifest favor with His people has a strangely attractive power with observant, thoughtful men of the world.

**11-14. The offerings of the people, and their covenant renewed with Jehovah.** The burnt-



offerings, like all other ceremonials of worship, were symbolic. The meaning of each was declared in the law of Moses. The *partial* burnt-offering, where the fat only was burned and the rest used for food, represented *thanksgiving* on the offering part. The *whole* burnt-offering, while including the ideas of substitution and propitiation for sin, also represented complete *self-consecration*. In both aspects, the offerings now presented were specially appropriate. By each of its families, represented in these thousands of offerings, the nation symbolically expressed its gratitude for deliverance and its purpose of consecration; at the same time recognizing the sovereign *mercy* of Jehovah. Very naturally followed a formal renewal of covenant with "the Lord God of their fathers." With all the mass of ceremonial observances commanded under that old covenant, the fact ought to be always borne in mind by us that the comprehensive, sublime demand of supreme love and heart-obedience to God is declared in the simplest, clearest words, upon constantly recurring pages of the history. No candid, true-hearted Israelite could fail to understand that this personal love and obedience was the principle which underlaid all outward ordinances and ceremonies. So we read, in this renewal of covenant with God, that the people pledged themselves, *not* to perform required ceremonials, but *to seek the Lord God with all their heart and with all their soul*.

Two personal suggestions are to be noted here. 1. Under the new covenant, not outward and ceremonial, but only inward and spiritual sacrifices are demanded. Yet the substance of those old symbolic offerings is identical in all particulars with the new worship. Both comprise as their essential elements *thanksgiving and praise, and penitent trust in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God's appointment*, as the substitute for the sinner's death, the propitiation for his sin, and the means of his purification. 2. The clear recognition of God's covenant proffered through Christ's sacrifice and intercession and the hearty acceptance of it will prompt a true response to it. This response consists in a continuous self-consecration of the whole heart and life to Christ and His service.

**15.** *The result of a renewed covenant: gladness and prosperity.* Their oath was heartfelt and sincere, and was followed by honest and true endeavor; and God gave them rest, and enriched them by years of uninterrupted prosperity. An old lesson we here read again, yet one that is hardest to learn: that *His favor and*

*our unbroken prosperity go with the loving heart and obedient life.* While there are exceptions, like the blind man of Jerusalem (John 9), where special trials are permitted in order to emphasize more manifestly the glory of God, yet the law of God's dealing is, that the outward life of *the Christian is prospered* in proportion to his *truth, his trust, and his obedience, toward God!* B.

No joy is equal to that which accompanies this transaction of engaging ourselves to God. We have never any true joy, joy of a pure and elevated nature, till we know what it is to enter into covenant with God by the sacrifice of Christ. Men may have pleasure before, but not joy. They may have the satisfactions of the world, transient and unholy; but the mind is not blessed, the heart is not filled with intellectual, moral, substantial joy. Those who engage themselves to Him have a pledge of all future blessings. He is pleased to pledge Himself to them, as their protector, and rest, and peace, and portion. Asa and his people, in the case before us, had a pledge of the serene possession of their own land. "The Lord gave them rest round about," says the text. They had the secure continuance of good laws and government, and the assurance of being free from plagues and judgments. But this engagement must be sincere and hearty, cordial and affectionate. The Christian renounces all other masters, and cheerfully devotes himself to one Master, even Christ. He is a volunteer in His service, made willing in the day of Christ's power, and presented to Him in the beauty of holiness. *R. Hall.*

**17. The heart of Asa was perfect all his days.** It is not meant that Asa was sinless, for the writer soon afterward records some grievous transgressions of this king's; but only that he was free from the sin of idolatry, and continued faithful to Jehovah all his life.

**16: 1-6.** This passage runs parallel with 1 K. 15: 17-22, and contains nothing additional, except the date in verse 1, and the mention, in verse 4, of the "store cities" of Naphtali. B. C.—This general defection to Asa of the worshippers of Jehovah throughout the kingdom of Israel must have added great strength, especially moral strength, to Judah. It alarmed Baasha, the king of Israel, who renewed the war with all his forces, and fortified Ramah, as a sort of blockading station on the frontier of Judah, to prevent his subjects from going over to Asa. It was then that the good king of Judah committed the one great error of

his life. He not only resorted to the heathen king of Damascus, Benhadad I., but he took the treasures of the house of God to purchase his alliance. P. S.—Benhadad was only too ready to entertain Asa's proposals. On receiving the rich bribe, which made Judah virtually tributary to him, he broke his league with Baasha, and immediately invaded Israel, overrunning the northern territory, penetrating as far as the district of Chinneroth—which gave its name to the lake of Gennesaret—and occupying the land of Naphtali. This threatening danger in the north of his dominions obliged Baasha hastily to quit Ramah. Asa now summoned all Judah. The materials accumulated for the fortress of Ramah were removed, and used for building two new forts: Geba ("the height") and Mizpah ("the outlook") (cf. Josh. 18 : 24, 26; also Jer. 41 : 5-9). Both these cities lay within the territory of Benjamin, about three miles to the north of Ramah, in very strong positions, and commanded the two roads to Jerusalem. A. E.

3. Asa repaired Shishak's plunder of the Temple by rich offerings of gold and silver, in addition to those dedicated by his father, probably in the early part of his reign, but since transferred to the heathen shrines. It is indeed curious to observe how soon the treasures, of which the Temple was repeatedly stripped—by Shishak, by Asa himself at a later time, and by other kings—were again supplied. The commerce established by Solomon with Arabia and the East, and with the silver-producing regions of Western Europe, must have continued to flourish. P. S.

7-10. But however successful it seemed in its immediate object, the thing that Asa had done displeased the Lord. It was a want of that reliance upon the Lord, which once, in a really more urgent strait, had won him so much honor; it was the tempting of another to do a dishonorable breach of faith; and it was the bringing of a heathen destroyer into that land which was still the Lord's heritage, though it belonged not to Judah; and upon that people who were still His, although they had strayed from Him. For this—but especially for his relying upon the king of Syria more than upon the King of Heaven—a prophet was sent to rebuke and threaten him. It was intimated that for this he had not only lost a great victory over the Syrians which the Lord would have given to him, but his future reign should be troubled with wars. To be thus rebuked in the moment when his diplomatic stroke seemed to have fulfilled its purpose so well, was more

than one so little used to contradiction could bear; and in his rage he sent the faithful prophet to prison—adding to his original fault the grievous sin of persecuting an inspired messenger of Jehovah. Here we have the melancholy spectacle of a prophet of God imprisoned—not by an idolatrous or notoriously wicked king, but by one who has hitherto borne a noble character and whose heart was substantially right with God. Not so did David receive Nathan's more stern rebuke. This descendant of his does that, for only attempting to do which Jeroboam had his arm palsied. But, as Bishop Hall charitably remarks: "It were a pity that the best man should be judged by each of his actions, and not by all; the course of our life must either allow or condemn us, not these sudden exceptions." *Kitto*.

8. The many experiences we have had of the goodness of God to us aggravate our distrust of Him. Has He not helped us in six troubles? And have we any reason to suspect Him in the seventh? But see how deceitful our hearts are! We trust in God when we have nothing else to trust to, when need drives us to Him; but when we have other things to stay on we are apt to stay too much on them, and to lean to our own understanding as long as that has anything to offer; but a believing confidence will be in God only when a smiling world courts it most. H.

9. Let this sentence be remembered, and stay by you always, even from this hour till your last—"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, through the whole earth, to show Himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." This "perfect heart" means a right conscience, a clean, simple intent. And the substance of the declaration is, that God is on the lookout always for an honest man—Him to help, with Him and for Him to be strong; and if there be one, that God will not miss of him; for His desiring, all-searching eyes are running the world through always to find him. And when He finds him He will show Himself to him in the discovery even of His strength. Many a skeptic has He flooded with light, because He saw him willing at last to be right, and hungering for something true. This perfect heart, this soul of integrity, oh, if we had but this, what else could we fail of? Ponder then this word, put it down to be with you in your struggles with sin, your sickness, your poverty, your Christian defects and drynesses, all the mind-clouds, all the guilt-clouds, of your mortal state—"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole earth to show Himself

strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him." *Bushnell.*

10. Hanani had spoken as all the prophets of Jehovah, fearlessly, faithfully, and only too truly. It was probably conviction of this which, in the unhumiliated state of the king, kindled his anger against "the seer." Once more it might seem to Asa as not implying rebellion against God, only a necessary precaution against disunion and dissatisfaction among his own subjects, threatening to upset his political calculations and combinations, to use measures of severity against the prophet from which he would have shrunk at a former period of his reign. All the more requisite might these appear, since his unwelcome monitor evidently commanded the sympathies of an influential part of the community. But it was an unheard-of proceeding, which happily found imitation only in the worst times of Israel, to put the prophet of the Lord "in the house of stocks" on account of his faithfulness, and by a series of persecutions to oppress, and, if possible, crush those who sympathized with him.

12. The fatal tendency which had showed itself in the Syrian alliance, and still more in the measures against Hanani and his sympathizers, continued and increased with the lapse of years. Two years before his death Asa was attacked by some disease in his feet. In this "also" "he sought not Jehovah but in (by) the physicians." He trusted not in the supernatural, but applied to the natural: and in the natural course of events his disease ended in death. It was not wrong to employ means, indeed such were used in the miraculous cure of Hezekiah (2 K. 20: 7), just as in the miraculous rescue of St. Paul's companions from shipwreck (Acts 27: 23, 24, 43, 44). And if one lesson more than another has been impressed on our minds in the course of this history, it is that of the use of natural means, in the ordinary and rational succession of events, for the accomplishment of supernatural and divinely announced purposes. But the error and sin of Asa consisted in seeking an object, however lawful and even desirable, in, by, and through

secondary means, without first seeking Jehovah. Such conduct carried with it its natural result. A. E.

There is a most remarkable passage in the Apocrypha, which has been much overlooked in the consideration of the question. It is in Ecclesiasticus: "Honor a physician with the honor due unto him, for the uses which ye may have of him: for the Lord hath created him. For of the Most High cometh healing, and he shall receive honor of the king. The skill of the physician shall lift up his head [*s. e.*, raise him to honor]: and in the sight of great men he shall be in admiration. The Lord hath created medicines out of the earth: and he that is wise will not abhor them. Was not the water made sweet with wood, that the virtue thereof might be known? And he giveth men skill, that He might be honored in His marvellous works. With such doth He heal [men], and taketh away their pains. Of such doth the apothecary make a confection; and of His works there is no end; and from Him is peace over all the earth. My son, in thy sickness be not negligent: but pray unto the Lord, and He will make thee whole. Leave off from sin, and order thine hands aright, and cleanse thine heart from all wickedness. Give a sweet savor; and a memorial of fine flour; and make a fat offering, as not being. Then give place to the physician, for the Lord hath created him: let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him. There is a time when in their hands there is good success: for they shall also pray unto the Lord, that He would prosper that which they give for ease and remedy to prolong life." It appears to us that this passage very exactly defines the position of the physician. It allows him honor, and gives due weight to his skill and the real use of the means he employs, but admirably refers all to God. The skill of the physician is His; the medicaments are His; and the cure is His. Even the skill of the physician is proportioned to the faculty he possesses of rendering God honor, by his knowledge and employment of the healing properties which He has imparted to various productions of the earth. *Kitto.*

## Section 33.

REIGN OF JEHOSEPHAT, 25 YEARS.

## 4th of Ahab to 5th of Jehoram, of Israel.

2 CHRONICLES, CHAPS. 17-20.

17 : 1 AND Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against 2 Israel. And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Asa his father had taken. 3 And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto the 4 Baalim ; but sought to the God of his father, and walked in his commandments, 5 and not after the doings of Israel. Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand ; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents ; and he had riches and honour 6 in abundance. And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD : and furthermore he took away the high places and the 7 Asherim out of Judah. Also in the third year of his reign he sent his princes, even Ben-hail, and Obadiah, and Zechariah, and Netanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities 8 of Judah ; and with them the Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, the Levites ; and with them 9 Elishama and Jehoram, the priests. And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the LORD with them, and they went about throughout all the cities of 10 Judah, and taught among the people. And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so 11 that they made no war against Jehoshaphat. And some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute ; the Arabians also brought him flocks, seven thousand 12 and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats. And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly ; and he built in Judah castles and cities of store. And he 13 had many works in the cities of Judah ; and men of war, mighty men of valour, in Jerusalem. 14 And this was the numbering of them according to their fathers' houses : of Judah, the captains of thousands ; Adnah the captain, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred 15 thousand : and next to him Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and four 16 score thousand : and next to him Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself 17 unto the LORD ; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour : and of Benjamin ; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him two hundred thousand armed with bow 18 and shield : and next to him Jehozabad, and with him an hundred and fourscore thousand 19 ready prepared for war. These were they that waited on the king, beside those whom the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah.

1 KINGS 22 : 41-50.

41 AND Jehoshaphat the son of Asa began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab 42 king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Azubah 43 the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the way of Asa his father ; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD : howbeit the high places were not taken away ; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high 44 places. And Jehoshaphat made peace with 45 the king of Israel. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the 46 kings of Judah ? And the remnant of the sodomites, which remained in the days of his father Asa, he put away out of the land. 47 And there was no king in Edom : a deputy 48 was king. Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold : but they went not ; for the ships were broken at 49 Ezion-geber. Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships. But Jehoshaphat would not. And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father : and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

*Chap. 18, giving the account of the union of forces between Ahab and Jehoshaphat, the disastrous battle of Ramoth-Gilead, and death of Ahab, is embodied in the latter's history, Section 15.*

**19:1** And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.  
 2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the wicked, and love them that hate the LORD ? for this thing wrath is  
 3 upon thee from before the LORD. Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast put away the Asheroth out of the land, and hast set thine heart to seek God.  
 4 And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem : and he went out again among the people from Beer-sheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD, the God  
 5 of their fathers. And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, Consider what ye do : for ye judge not for man, but  
 7 for the LORD ; and *he is* with you in the judgement. Now therefore let the fear of the LORD be upon you ; take heed and do it : for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor re-  
 8 spect of persons, nor taking of gifts. Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites and the priests, and of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel, for the judgement of  
 9 the LORD, and for controversies. And they returned to Jerusalem. And he charged them,  
 10 saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart. And whensoever any controversy shall come to you from your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgements, ye shall warn them, that they be not guilty towards the LORD, and so wrath come upon you  
 11 and upon your brethren : this do, and ye shall not be guilty. And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD ; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters : also the Levites shall be officers before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD be with the good.

**20:1** And it came to pass after this, that the children of Moab, and the children of  
 2 Ammon, and with them some of the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle. Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea from Syria ; and, behold, they be in Hazazon-tamar (the same is En-  
 3 gedi). And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek unto the LORD ; and he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together, to seek *help* of the  
 5 LORD : even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new  
 6 court ; and he said, O LORD, the God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven ? and art not thou ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations ? and in thine hand is power and might,  
 7 so that none is able to withstand thee. Didst not thou, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for  
 8 ever ? And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,  
 9 If evil come upon us, the sword, judgement, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house, and before thee, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction,  
 10 and thou wilt hear and save. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of  
 11 Egypt, but they turned aside from them, and destroyed them not ; behold, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them ? for we have no might against this great company that  
 13 cometh against us ; neither know we what to do : but our eyes are upon thee. And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, the Levite, of the sons of Asaph, came the spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation ;  
 15 and he said, Harken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat : thus saith the LORD unto you, Fear not ye, neither be dismayed by reason of this  
 16 great multitude ; for the battle is not yours, but God's. To-morrow go ye down against them : behold, they come up by the ascent of Ziz ; and ye shall find them at the end of the  
 17 valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this *battle* : set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD withr you, O Judah and Jerusalem : fear not, nor be dismayed : to-morrow go out against them ; for the LORD is with you.  
 18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground : and all Judah and the inhabitants  
 19 of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. And the Levites, of the chil-

dren of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God  
 20 of Israel, with an exceeding loud voice. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth  
 into the wilderness of Tekoa : and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me,  
 O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem ; believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be  
 21 established ; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And when he had taken counsel  
 with the people, he appointed them that should sing unto the LORD, and praise the beauty of  
 holiness, as they went out before the army, and say, Give thanks unto the LORD ; for his  
 22 mercy *endureth* for ever. And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set liers in  
 wait against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against  
 23 Judah ; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against  
 the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them : and when they had made  
 24 an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah  
 came to the watch-tower of the wilderness, they looked upon the multitude ; and, behold,  
 25 they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and there were none that escaped. And when  
 Jehoshaphat and his people came to take the spoil of them, they found among them in  
 abundance both riches and dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for  
 themselves, more than they could carry away : and they were three days in taking of the  
 26 spoil, it was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley  
 of Beracah ; for there they blessed the LORD : therefore the name of that place was called The  
 27 valley of Beracah, unto this day. Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem,  
 and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy ; for the LORD  
 28 had made them to rejoice over their enemies. And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries  
 29 and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD. And the fear of God was on all the king-  
 doms of the countries, when they heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.  
 30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet : for his God gave him rest round about.  
 31 And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah : he was thirty and five years old when he began  
 to reign ; and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem : and his mother's name was  
 32 Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in the way of Asa his father, and turned  
 33 not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD. Howbeit the high  
 places were not taken away ; neither as yet had the people set their hearts unto the God of  
 34 their fathers. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they are writ-  
 ten in the history of Jehu the son of Hanani, which is inserted in the book of the kings of  
 Israel.  
 35 And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel ;  
 36 the same did very wickedly : and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to  
 37 Tarshish : and they made the ships in Ezion-geber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavahu  
 of Maresah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with  
 Ahaziah, the LORD hath destroyed thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were  
 not able to go to Tarshish.

**2 Chron. 17 : 1, 2.** *Jehoshaphat strengthens the defences of Judah.* Son of Asa, fourth king of Judah, Jehoshaphat succeeded to the throne B.C. 914, at thirty-five years of age. His reign lasted twenty-five years, to B.C. 889. Ahab was now king in Israel ; Benhadad I. still reigned in Syria ; and Elisha abode in Israel. There had been from the division a chronic state of hostility between the kindred kingdoms. It was the cities on the frontier of Israel that Jehoshaphat first sought to strengthen, as his father had done the cities on the southern border. Walls were built or rebuilt ; walled towns were garrisoned, and military outposts and stations established.

**3-5.** *God's ample return for faithful service.* Two points are here referred to concerning Je-

hoshaphat's conduct ; each one in a double form, positive and comparative. It is said : 1. That he sought *not* unto Baalim, but *sought* to the Lord God of his father. Baalim, the plural form, refers to the various names, images or places in which the Tyrian god Baal, already introduced widely into Israel and Judea, was worshipped. In the licentious practices and cruelties of that abominable worship Jehoshaphat took no part ; nor had he faith or respect for any such divinity. Jehovah, the true God, the God of his fathers, was the sole object of his trust, the Divine *Being* whom he *sought to*, or worshipped. 2. He *walked in Jehovah's commandments*, and *not* after the doings of Israel. To the *seeking*, or the trust and worship, he added *the obedient life*, here called

"walking in His commandments." The figure is as expressive as it is familiar. We read of the walk with God or before Him; the walk by faith, the upright and the disorderly walk: everywhere descriptive of the tenor of the life, whether true and godly, or self-seeking, false, and defiant toward God. This good king sought to do as well as to know the will of God. He re-established more thoroughly the law and worship of Jehovah throughout his kingdom. And, it is added, he did *not* walk "after the doings of Israel." We remember that Jezebel, Ahab's impious queen, had just enthroned the Baal worship as the supreme religion of the kingdom of Israel. And it is to this universal acceptance of that gigantic and terrible idolatry by the people of Israel that reference is here made.

The practical suggestions are plain when we read that *because* Jehoshaphat thus sought to Jehovah and walked in His commandments, the Lord was with him. If we would secure the only desirable favor, that of God, our first and ever foremost personal duty is a trustful seeking of God, as revealed in Christ. The necessary condition and consequence of such seeking of God is the turning away from all other seeking and trust, from any and all other objects of supreme attachment and interest. And second, persistent search to know and unremitting endeavor to do the revealed will of God must accompany, and prove as genuine the trustful seeking of God. This *doing of His* will also implies the *not doing our own will* when differing from His. In other words, obedience means and includes all necessary self-denial and sacrifice. How the Lord's favor was realized and made manifest further appears in the narrative. The kingdom was more firmly established. The whole people gladly added large voluntary gifts to the ordained taxes, for use by the king in adding to the strength and splendor of the kingdom. And, it is added, "he had riches and honor in abundance." The prosperity and renown of his reign far exceeded that of any rule in either of the divided kingdoms. B.

**3. He walked in the first ways of his father.** The purest blood this world has ever known is that of a Christian ancestry. It outranks all other aristocracies. Descent from kings and emperors bears no comparison with it. There is a law of Christian nurture by which, through the grace of God, every Christian family becomes a nursery of the Church of Christ. Such is God's obvious design. Character is not transferable from father to son, but the elements out of which character

grows are so. Religion once rooted in a Christian family should achieve so much consecration of Christian forces. A moral dike is thus built up against the floods of depravity, behind which children may be safe, as Holland is from the inroads of the sea. There is no good reason why our children should not grow up into Christian faith, instead of being wrenched into it by moral convulsions after years of riot in depravity. Phelps.

**Ways of Baalim.** By "Baalim" seem to be meant different forms of the god Baal, such as Baal-berith, Baal-peor, Baal-zebul, and the like. Jehoshaphat was not seduced into this worship, though in his day it overspread almost the whole kingdom of Israel.

**4. The doings of Israel.** By this we are to understand not so much the worship of the calves, which, being antagonistic to Judah, could scarcely possess attractions for a Jewish king, as the special idolatrous doings of the time—the introduction and establishment of the worship of Baal and the groves. B. C.

**6-9.** The memorable crowning act of Jehoshaphat's reign. Instead of a heart lifted up with pride because of prosperity, these proofs of Divine favor wrought in him a grateful lifting of heart in the ways of the Lord. Still more thoroughly he sought to root out the spirit and practice of idolatry from the entire kingdom. But his greatest work, one which gave the highest distinctive character to his reign, is narrated in verses 7-9. It consisted in an organized mission to instruct the entire people in the knowledge of the then written Word of God. The Scriptures of Moses we know were included in "the book of the law of the Lord." A copy of this law the king entrusted to a commission of five princes, nine Levites, and two priests, whose names are here recorded. This commission he sent throughout all the cities of Judah, with instructions to gather the people together and teach afresh the forgotten Divine precepts. The princes directed the work to which their presence, as the king's personal representatives, lent dignity and authority. The Levites and priests, as the appointed interpreters, read and expounded the written Word of Jehovah. It was a new and greatly needed measure, the first endeavor of a practical kind to diffuse among the people the knowledge of Jehovah Himself, of His law, and of His previous dealings with His chosen people. And it was the conception and execution of this grand work which eminently distinguished the reign of this good and gentle king. To realize how memorable and crown-

ing an act it was we have but to recall the long, sad history of the whole nation's declension in the knowledge and service of Jehovah, from the days of Solomon onward. B.

It is, in fact, the first missionary effort on record. For the first time instruction in the ways of God was brought to their homes. As Matthew Henry well writes, "He dealt with them as reasonable creatures, and would not lead them blindfold, no, not into a reformation, but endeavored to have them well taught, knowing that that was the way to have them well cured." *W. Benham.*

**9. And had the book of the law with them.** There is no reasonable doubt that this "book of the law" was the Pentateuch—nearly, if not quite, in the shape in which we now have it. Copies of the whole law were, no doubt, scarce; and therefore Jehoshaphat's commission took care to carry a copy with them. B. C.

**10. The remarkable result of the king's fidelity to Jehovah and wide dissemination of His Word.** It is not said that the people of Judah were prospered, but that the neighboring hostile countries were so impressed by the prevalent spirit of God's now obedient people that a fear of Him came upon those heathen nations. So Judah had peace without and tranquillity within. More than this, on the one side the Philistines, and the Arabians on the other, voluntarily brought presents of silver and of flocks to the king of Judah. A great prosperity came to king and people. The business of the cities was vastly augmented, and large treasures were accumulated. And this was the reward of even imperfect obedience and of partial knowledge and regard of the Word of Jehovah! How clear and striking the lessons to us of the latest days! God's Word, now full and complete, may be in every hand. In every hand it should be placed. It may be apprehended by every mind and received by every heart. The heart knowledge of and obedience to its truths brings inward peace and outward prosperity to the individual soul, and to the nation. Are not these thoughts worthy of profound consideration and self-application? B.

**12-19.** Throughout the whole country he built "cities of store," or magazines of arms and provisions. In Jerusalem he collected a large military force, under five chief captains, Adnah, Jehohanan, Amasiah the son of Zichri, Eliada, and Jehozabad, who were placed at the head of five distinct *corps d'armée*. Over the garrisons in the other towns he placed his own sons as commandants, or else princes chosen out of

the host, supplying them in abundance with silver and gold (21 : 8). G. R.

**Chap. 18.** In common with the Book of Kings, the account is given of the union of Jehoram, the son and successor of Jehoshaphat, with Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel; and also of the joint warfare of Ahab and Jehoshaphat with Benhadad of Syria, with the fatal issue of the conflict in the death of Ahab. (See Section 15.) B.

**Chap. 19.** This chapter is entirely additional to Kings, and of great interest. It deals with three matters only, the rebuke addressed to Jehoshaphat by the prophet Jehu (verses 1-3), the personal efforts of Jehoshaphat to effect a religious reformation (verse 4), and his reform of the judicial system (verses 5-11).

**1. Jehoshaphat returned to his house in peace.** With the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, and the death of Ahab, the war came to an end. The combined attack of the two kings having failed, their troops had been withdrawn, and the enterprise in which they had joined relinquished. The Syrians, satisfied with their victory, did not press on the retreating foe, or carry the war into their enemies' country. B. C.

**1-3. The reproof of Jehoshaphat by the prophet Jehu.** The best lives recorded in the Scripture history are marred by infirmity and sin. At some time and in some of its forms, self-seeking gets the mastery, and works its evil and wretchedness. So it was with this good king. For his fidelity God gave him many years of great prosperity—as *He ever gives to the truly faithful, and continues so long as they abide true and unselfish.* But his "abundant riches and honor," helped by his strong natural sympathy for a great national league, if not an ultimate reunion of the two kingdoms, led him into an alliance with Ahab of Israel. After six years of conflict he confirms a treaty of peace by the marriage of his youthful son Jehoram with the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. The point of Jehoshaphat's offence was not any *direct self-seeking*, but it was a wrong aim in leaguering with Ahab, God's open enemy; an aim pursued, therefore, in disregard of God's will. He would rearrange matters between the two kingdoms, without making the God of both a party to the new arrangement; without even consulting him. Practically, in making so intimate an affiliation with Ahab and Jezebel, he went over from the Lord's side to the ranks of the Lord's most eminent enemies. And he did this not only in the ill-starred marriage of his son, but also in joining forces with Ahab against



the invading king of Syria. Nay, further than this, when the warning of God was sent to him by Micaiah upon the battle-field, Jehoshaphat disregarded it, and went into the battle at Ahab's side. After the defeat and death of Ahab, he returned with a disarrayed army to Jerusalem. At the gate of the city the king and army were met by another prophet of Jehovah, Jehu, the son of Hanani.

"Wrath is upon thee from the Lord!" Jehu openly announced. "Shouldest thou *love them that hate the Lord, and help the ungodly?*" Exactly this the king had done; in allying his household with that of Jezebel, and in joining his army with that of Ahab. Upon the ordinary principles governing national alliances there would be no ground of objection to this whole procedure of Jehoshaphat. Mere human politicians would count it wise. "It were far better," they would say, "that these adjoining kingdoms of the same people should be at peace and in alliance; and that both should unite their strength against their most formidable common enemy." But *then* God was a *known and active* party in all these issues. Ahab was His open and pronounced enemy; Jehoshaphat His avowed subject. Nothing but failure, loss and misery could result to any, whether foes or friends, whom God did not aid and favor. And He could not—Jehoshaphat well knew—succeed those who avowedly hated and defied Him, as Ahab and Jezebel had always done. Upon this knowledge, the good king was rightly adjudged and condemned for his alliance with and help of Ahab. The sentence of wrath seems to have been executed, as so many Divine chastisements are visited, not upon the king himself and his people, but in the way of natural result, upon his *son and his* people. It came in the evil and suffering consequent upon the idolatry and crime introduced into Judah through the marriage with the wicked Athaliah, daughter of the viler Jezebel.

Here are practical suggestions, wide-reaching and momentous. They cover the whole vital matter of human alliances—personal, family and national. Whatever nice questions, of application to details, may remain unsolved, the essential principle is simple and clear. It is that we are not to accept as heart friends, life guides or family counsellors avowed enemies of God, positive disbelievers in the truths of His Word, even those who lack positively just, pure principles, or who have not measurably proved such principles by a settled practice.

But with the very words of reproof the great mercifulness of God appears. For with rebuke

he joins *commendation* for the *good things* Jehoshaphat had done. It is one of the multiplied proofs that lie upon the Scripture pages, of God's full, glad recognition of everything He can find to approve. How unlike mere human parents and friends is *He* in this; that *He upbraideth not*. Reproof, rebuke, He utters; and where wickedness is aggravated by intelligent, defiant impiety, He uses the severest denunciation. But no approach or casting back of acknowledged sin comes from Him. Rather does He rejoice in the feeblest purpose and smallest fragments of good, and own them with glad approval. And *this* is the cheering truth which the story further suggests. You may read it in the comforting, golden promise of 1 John 1:9. B.

2. It is wonderful at how many points the biographies of the Old Testament touch modern life. Jehoshaphat was a representative man—representative of a large class of good men in every age, who for selfish ends choose their friends from among the irreligious and the worldly. The friendship of wicked men is *one of the most dangerous social temptations to which Christians are subjected*. A Christian who subjects his Christian faith to worldly policy in the choice of his associates in life strikes right athwart the whole range of scriptural command and admonition and exhortation and example. No Christian can safely do that. Further, Christian alliances with the wicked *do not command the respect of the very men for whose favor they are formed*. Men of the world are very keen in their judgments of Christian character. They know what is consistent Christian living when they see it, as well as we do. Indeed, their theoretic ideal of a Christian life is commonly more exalted than that of men who are struggling to realize it. No other class of men are so prompt to tell us what they would do if they believed as we do as those who believe nothing. An upright and downright Christian they always revere. In heart they make obedience to him as to no other type of man. Do you not know a godless man who professes to have lost all faith in religion, but who makes exception of some one humble Christian woman—his mother perhaps, or sister, or wife? "If ever human being gets to heaven, she will," is his testimony. That one life keeps open to his faith the celestial gates. . . . Of this trial of Christian principle, it should be further said that the Christian religion requires no narrow or ascetic seclusion from the world. The thing which Christian principle forbids is the seeking of worldly friendships and alliances for selfish

ends, and to the peril of religious usefulness and religious character. *Phelps*.

As to the sin itself with which Jehoshaphat is charged, and the probable reasons or motives of its commission, we must seek an explanation of his conduct rather in mistaken views of policy than in any considerable indifference to the honor of God, or any leaning to the defections of apostasy and idolatry. In his anxiety to pacify, to conciliate, and to reclaim he was tempted to go a little too far—even to the sacrificing of his own high integrity, and the apparent countenancing of Israel's corruptions. Here lay the error of this good prince; and here it was that he suffered the subtlety of worldly wisdom and the spurious kindness of worldly liberality to interfere with the simplicity of an upright and honorable faith in God, and a godly love toward men. To desire the restoration of his brethren of Israel to the privileges of the covenant which they had renounced was natural, just and right, in one who himself valued these privileges so highly. But with this view, and under this pretence, to make friendly advances toward them, and show a disposition to unite with them, in their present state of apostasy and idolatry—this was imprudence—this was sin. *Candlish*.

**4. Jehoshaphat went out again through the people and brought them back.** While continuing to maintain, both with Ahaziah and with his successor Jehoram, the closest and most friendly relations, Jehoshaphat was careful to show that he had no sympathy with idolatry, and was determined to keep his people, so far as he possibly could, free from it. He therefore now personally set about a second reformation. Passing through the whole land, from the extreme south to the extreme north—from Beer-sheba to the cities in Mount Ephraim which Abijah had taken from Jeroboam (chap. 13:19)—he once more put down by the strong arm of authority all idolatrous worship, and brought his people back to Jehovah, the God of their fathers. G. R.

**5-7. Appointment of judges throughout the land, and charge respecting their duties.** God's reproof wrought a salutary effect upon the "heart prepared to seek" Him. Through the land among all the people the king went again on a Christ-like mission: to "bring them back unto the Lord God of their fathers." The great object of all these kingly missions in Judah was the extirpation of idolatry. Now, through the recent alliance with idolatrous Israel, the evil had been disseminated with fresh power and impetus. That the king himself had re-

ceived no taint is manifest, before by the prophet's commendation, and now by his own earnest, self-denying work of visitation. Not only the interests of religion, but those of righteous government were cared for in this self-imposed beneficent mission. Of two classes of tribunals then instituted, these verses refer to that which was the inferior, more numerous and widespread. In all the larger towns he appointed new judges, with new methods and powers of administering justice. The reason for this reform we can only conjecture—that it was necessitated by the existing corruption which had grown out of so long unresisted idolatry.

The charge to the appointed judges is a sublime one. It has *special* application to all who *make, expound and administer, and execute human laws—i.e., to all officials connected with human government.* Yet its grand counsels, with the reasons upon which they are based, apply to every responsible human actor in every sphere of accountable human action. "Take heed what you do, for you act not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you to direct and aid you in your acting! Wherefore, knowing this, take heed to do whatever you do in the trustful, prayerful fear of the Lord. Act justly, with truth and righteousness; as God Himself acts, without iniquity in your hearts, without respect of persons, without perversion of the right in return for bribe of any sort. All human conduct, however it affects our fellow-man, has supreme respect to the known will of God. All truth and honesty, all just and kind dealing toward man, have their vital spring in the heart's homage and obedience to God. And all injustice and deceit, all unkindness and wrong toward men, have their secret source in the heart's disobedience and rejection of God. Simply recognizing this cardinal fact of human action, in the sore remembrance of his blood-guiltiness toward Uriah, David said, *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.* And it is this double foundation truth that Christ asserts in the judgment allegory by the words, *Ye did it, and Ye did it not—unto Me!*

**8, 9. Establishment of a supreme court of appeal in Jerusalem, and charge to its chosen judges.** Beside the inferior courts in the several cities, Jehoshaphat created a supreme tribunal with original and appellate jurisdiction, and located it in the capital. As its judges he chose the best and wisest of the priests and Levites, and of the heads of the families of Judah. This tribunal had two divisions: one presided over (verse 11) by Amariah, the chief priest; the other

by Zebadiah, the ruler of the king's house. The former adjudicated upon "all matters of the Lord;" all questions pertaining to the ceremonial and ritual law prescribed by Jehovah. The latter finally determined all civil and criminal cases arising under the laws of the land. Over the doings of the supreme judicatory the king himself could exercise general oversight and control. His charge to its members was simpler and more comprehensive than that to the inferior judges in the cities; but its substance was the same. What they did he enjoined them to do faithfully, in the fear of the Lord, and with a perfect, or undivided, heart. Thus this good and wise king completed a great and needed reformation in Judah. He re-established a pure worship. He instituted a system of religious education among the people, causing them to be instructed in the knowledge of the written Scriptures. And he established these tribunals for a wise and faithful administration of justice throughout the land. B.

**Chap. 20.** The narrative contained in this chapter, as far as verse 30, is entirely additional to Kings. The remainder, except verse 37, runs parallel with 1 K. 22:41-49. B. C.

**1-13.** As we have already learned, this good and wise king had taught his people the written Word of Jehovah. He had restored a true and pure temple worship in Jerusalem. And he had established tribunals for the efficient administration of law and justice. Years of quiet and prosperity followed these wise, right measures. Then trouble arose from a new quarter. The Ammonites and Moabites, descendants of the two sons of Lot, who occupied the region eastward of the Dead Sea, and the Edomites, descendants of Esau, inhabiting the mountains extending southward to the Red Sea, combined in undertaking the subjugation of Judah, and a permanent possession of the territory. Hence the immense multitude, and the untold amount of spoil afterward gathered; for not only all the armed men, but the mass of the entire people of those three nations seem to have migrated in this hostile movement. The great combined host had passed round the southern limit of the Dead Sea, and half way up its western border, and was encamped at Engedi, only thirty miles from Jerusalem, when the intelligence of the invasion first reached the king and people. Speedily, at the king's summons, came the people together at the capital. With the fighting men were their wives and children, for the summons was to the taking part in a religious service rather than in a combat. In *this* Jehoshaphat exhibited *his faith* at the very

outset. To the house of God he leads the alarmed people; to the temple where he had long before restored the highest condition of worship. There, in the great emergency, he shows how fully he understood and how deeply he sympathized with the spirit of that prayer of dedication which God had pledged Himself to answer. Himself following Solomon's example and leading the people in prayer, he makes bold and fervent appeal to Jehovah. His chief plea and reliance is upon His covenant-relation and special covenant promises to His people. But he also pleads the gross, because *causeless*, wrong of the invaders: for Israel had not trespassed upon their territory when entering into Canaan. Then with the declaration of utter inability to cope with the vast advancing multitude, the royal suppliant completes his prayer with sublime words of trust: *Our eyes are upon Thee!*

And **THEN**, while all Judah stood before the Lord, while these trustful words still lingered upon the king's lips, came

**14-17.** *God's answering message by Jehaziel, a prophet-psalmist.* From the midst of the gathered congregation, a voice instantly responded with the words: *Thus saith the Lord unto you!* The message included, first, needed assurance of safety for their encouragement; and next direction for their conduct. Ye have trusted in God; He will deliver you. Go down on the morrow against them, but not to fight. Set yourselves in array, but stand still to behold the Lord's deliverance. And the inspired speaker indicated the very place where, on the next day, their enemies were smitten of God. It was at a point only twelve miles from Jerusalem, at the head of the long winding ascent from Engedi, where the ravine issued into the tableland wilderness of Judah. B.

**15. The battle is God's.** The history of the Church is full of instances of this law of Divine procedure. An old saying of the German Reformers was this: "One with God on his side is a majority." Every cause which God originates starts with only Gideon's three hundred. From this law of God's working it is clear that in spiritual affairs the balance of power does not depend on numbers. Votes have very little to do with it. It depends on spiritual forces. It depends on insight into the spiritual wants of the world, on consecration to God's service, on the power of prayer, on spiritual discovery of the side on which God is, and specially on intensity of Christian character. . . . Minorities of honest and earnest men, devoted to a great cause, should never be

opposed heedlessly. Let us be on the lookout for such men. Let us greet them with a "God-speed" when they make their Divine credentials clear. . . . Within the Church of Christ itself is to be found a minority of believers whom God regards with peculiar complacency. As a spiritual power, they are the vanguard of the Church. They are the spiritual aristocracy of Christ's kingdom. *Phelps.*

**17. Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord.** The prophet used words almost identical with those which Moses had addressed to the Israelites on the shores of the Red Sea immediately before the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts (Ex. 14 : 18), thus indicating that the deliverance would, now as then, be wholly from God. B. C.

**18, 19. How God's response was received by king and people.** It was with humble worship and with grateful praise. Jehoshaphat and all Judah reverently prostrated themselves before the Lord ; while the Levite choirs, bands from the special families of the Kohathites and Korhites stood and chanted in their wonted loudly jubilant strains the high praises of the Lord God of Israel. This spontaneous unanimity, at once manifesting itself in worship and song, indicated the people's faith in the Divine assurance granted them. Some of the very words of the message they had read or heard out of the reopened, restudied book of the law and the providence of Jehovah toward Israel. *The battle is not yours, but God's. Stand ye, and see the salvation of the Lord with you!* And their faith was helped by the facts of the history, when these words had been made real and living. But even then they needed the *re-enforcement of their king's yet mightier and more absolute faith.* Hence followed on the next day.

**20. The grandly simple, purely evangelical exhortation of Jehoshaphat.** It occurred early on the next morning, as the armed hosts of Judah and Jerusalem passed through the great gate of the capital. In the gateway stood the true-hearted monarch, and, as band after band went by, he repeated the double charge : *Believe in the Lord your God! Believe His prophets!* So, he assured them, shall ye be established and prosper. No scene in Judah's history is at once so picturesque, sublime and instructive as this crowned preacher standing in the archway of the lofty gate, and earnestly reiterating this simple Gospel command, "Only believe." Long years of wise, good rule and of varied experience gave increased force to his urgency with these men of Judah. They had

known and trusted *him* ; therefore they would be the more willing to trust the God he trusted—the God who had prospered him and the people of Judah. We need not pause to suggest the application of this comprehensive call to faith. We *may* refer to the power for good which is accumulated by a long living Christian experience ; and to the effect of such *exerted* power in imparting or re-enforcing the spiritual strength, courage, or comfort of feeble or discouraged souls.

**21. The appointment of singers to express the people's trust in praise.** No preparation for fighting was to be made, though the armed men went in battle array. It was for them an utterly passive conflict, an inward fight of faith ; for they never saw a living enemy of all the host that had come so nigh them. But still they made preparation for the expected victory and triumph. And the preparation was exactly suited to the call and promise of God. It was a preparation for *praise*—for the utterance in songful worship of the people's assured trust in God ; and of their grateful acknowledgment *beforehand* of His promised delivering mercy. Apparelled in white linen robes, the symbols of *holy beauty*, bands of singers went before the army, as a vanguard of surest protection. And as they went all the way from the city to "the watch-tower in the wilderness," they ceased not their song of gratitude and trust : PRAISE JEHOVAH ; *for His mercy endureth forever!*

**22-30. The result that accompanied their trustful, praising refrain.** Let the record be noted : *when they BEGAN to sing and to praise, the Lord's work in their deliverance began.* And as they continued, for those long miles and hours of steady march, to sing and praise, Jehovah's hand stayed not in His destruction of their enemies and His, till "they were smitten." And when the still praising vanguard reached the place of carnage, "behold the multitude were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped." Among the three nations, composing the vast horde of invaders, God had stirred up dissension. This led to jealousies and animosities, which soon broke out into deadly strife with each other ; prolonged until multitudes were slain, and the remnant had fled panic-stricken to their native hills. Immense spoil and treasure covered the wide camping ground, requiring three days' work to gather and prepare for removal. So the same God, who in the New Testament characterizes Himself as *rich in mercy*, greatly *enriched* the king and people who had only asked for *deliverance.* And such *exceeding abundance above all we ask*

or think is His royal wont to all that *thoroughly trust and utterly repose* upon His promised mercy.

The history (verses 26-28) tells of their thankful recognition of both the signal deliverance and the large bounty. On the fourth day, before their homeward journey, they assembled themselves for special praise upon the field where the dead and the spoil had lain. And their service of blessing and thanksgiving thenceforward gave the name of Berachiah (or blessing) to the immediate region or valley. "Then returned *every man*, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront, to Jerusalem with joy." With harp and song "they came unto the house of the Lord." And to the record of their solemn yet joyful gratitude and praise, added to that of their previous prayerful trust, appropriately follows the statement: "So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God had given him rest. The Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel."

The story impressively discloses the relations of faith and praise, and strongly emphasizes the *high place and importance of a thankful, praising spirit among the essentials of Christian experience and living*. As faith must show itself by its fruits—of obedience to direction and expectation of blessing—so faith and love and gratitude, if they exist, *must* manifest themselves by their natural fruit of thanksgiving and praise. So was it here. The faith of king and people implicitly obeyed the Divine direction, and anticipated the fulfillment of the Divine promise. The assured expectation of blessing wrought love and gratitude, which found their expression in song and praise. So was it in all the Old Testament worship. Always prominent as an essential element, praise expressed the adoring, grateful feeling of true worshippers. The Psalms, scattered through the history and gathered in the Psalter, were but the utterance of a natural demand for such voiced expression of gratitude and adoration. And the habitual, fervent use of these inspired lyrics has maintained and intensified the feeling in all generations since. Richly, too, does the New Testament respond to this spirit of adoring praise and practice of thankful song, which so characterizes the Old economy. Throughout, by example and by precept with promise, it fervently commends thankfulness in song and the spirit of thankful praise in the heart. *When they had sung an hymn*, Christ went forth to His garden-agony. And we recall the midnight psalms, in the Philippian prison, of the Lord's suffering wit-

nesses. The Epistles abound in exhortations and thanksgiving. Study attentively Paul's inspired and inspiring counsels on this point (Eph. 5:19, 20; Col. 2:7; 3:15-17; Phil. 4:6, 7; 1 Thess. 5:18); and trace out in your Concordance the words "thankful," "thanksgiving," and their equivalents, if you would realize *the vital need of more praise, more felt and expressed thankfulness*, in your heart and in all Christian hearts. No defect in our practical Christianity to-day is more strange and signal, more hindering and hurtful, more deadening to faith, more paralyzing to loving obedience and effort, more enfeebling to prayer and to Christian living, than the lack of this praising spirit in the heart, and the withholding of its voiced or silent *expression* to God. As the emphatic teaching of this lesson, then, be it noted: *That the thankful, praising spirit is at once the highest proof and effect of a living trust, and its most efficient helper*. B.

Never was army so unaccountably destroyed as that of the enemy; not by dint of sword, or strength of arm, but the Lord set ambushments against them, that they fell upon their own friends as if they had been enemies, and *every one helped to destroy another*, so that *none escaped*. This God did *when His people began to sing and to praise* (verse 22), for He delights to furnish those with *matter* for praise that have *hearts* for it. Never was spoil so cheerfully divided, for Jehoshaphat's army had nothing to do beside; the rest was done for them. When they came to the view of this vast army, instead of finding living men to fight with, they found them all dead men. Jehoshaphat and his people prayed to be delivered from being spoiled by the enemy; and God not only did that, but enriched them with the spoil of the enemy. Never was victory celebrated with more solemn and enlarged thanksgivings. They kept a day of praise in the camp before they drew their forces out of the field. They assembled in a valley, where they blessed God with so much zeal and fervency that that day's work gave a name to the place, the valley of *Berachah—i.e., of blessing* (verse 26). Then they came in solemn procession, Jehoshaphat at the head, to Jerusalem, that the country, as they passed along, might join in their praises, and that they might give thanks for the mercy there where they had by prayer obtained it, *in the house of the Lord* (verses 27, 28). H.

The passage 2 *Chron.* 20:35-37 is manifestly out of its chronological order here. This event occurred within one, or at most two, years after

Ahab's death (Ahaziah, his successor, having reigned less than two years); consequently about the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat—eight years before his death. Hence the words "after this" cannot mean, after the great victory recorded in this chapter. With this passage compare 1 K. 22 : 48, 49. Ezion-geber being a port on the Elanitic branch of the Red Sea, these ships were for the Indian, not the Mediterranean trade, and were therefore called "ships of Tarshish" only in the sense of being ships of the largest size—"East Indiamen." Or possibly some place in those waters bore this name "Tarshish." The Lord wisely baffled this commercial enterprise; for it was not well for Jehoshaphat to be in intimate relations to this godless Ahaziah. H. C.

Jehoshaphat was a good king—one of the best of the Jewish sovereigns. He was, too, a prosperous and successful monarch. His country flourished under his sway. He sought to do his subjects good, and he did them good. God blessed and honored him in his ways. He died in peace and in favor with God. But he leaned to his own understanding in a matter of great moment. He put policy for principle, conciliation for frank dissent, worldly advantage for manly firmness, and sowed the seeds of evil, that lived and thrived and bore fruit centuries after his decease. *R. Hallam.*

There can be no doubt that Judea was extremely prosperous under Jehoshaphat's rule. He was certainly the ablest and most energetic king that had reigned over Judah since the time

of Solomon. While it cannot be denied that the one fatal mistake which he made in joining affinity with Ahab had, in course of time, the most terribly disastrous consequences, leading as it did to the desecration of the Temple, the complete apostasy of the State during the space of six years, and the almost entire destruction of the seed of David, yet the immediate results were, in a worldly point of view, advantageous, and a most flourishing condition of affairs seems to have been temporarily established. Commerce revived; Jehoshaphat's relations with the Edomites enabled him to resume possession of the port of Ezion-geber upon the shores of the Red Sea; and, although on one occasion the fleet which he had prepared to sail to Ophir for gold was destroyed by a storm almost before it was well out of harbor (2 K. 22 : 48), yet there is reason to believe that the trade was, at any rate to some extent, restored, and that in Jehoshaphat's reign Jewish fleets were once more seen upon the Red Sea and in the Indian Ocean, pursuing the peaceful occupations of traffic and commerce. Jehoshaphat built commercial cities as well as fortresses, and everywhere promoted a vigorous commercial policy. The riches which flowed in upon him (2 Chron. 17 : 5 ; 18 : 1) were the natural result of this course of action, though no doubt his resources received large accessions from various other quarters (*ibid.*, 17 : 5, 11 ; 20 : 25).

Jehoshaphat died at the age of sixty, leaving behind him seven sons of full age, the eldest of whom, Jehoram, he had designated as his successor (2 Chron. 21 : 2, 3). G. R.

## Section 34.

### REIGNS OF JEHORAM, AHAZIAH, AND ATHALIAH.

2 CHRONICLES, CHAPS. 21, 22, 23.

**21 : 1** AND Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David : and Jehoram his son reigned **2** in his stead. And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah : all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. And their father gave them great gifts, of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced

2 KINGS 8 : 16-29 ; 11 : 1-16.

**8 : 16** AND in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign. **17** Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years **18** in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab : for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife : and he did that which was evil in the **19** sight of the LORD. Howbeit the LORD would not destroy Judah, for David his ser-

cities in Judah : but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram, because he was the firstborn.

4 Now when Jehoram was risen up over the kingdom of his father, and had strengthened himself, he slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel. Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned 6 eight years in Jerusalem. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab : for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife : and he did that which was 7 evil in the sight of the LORD. Howbeit the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a 8 lamp to him and to his children alway. In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.

9 Then Jehoram passed over with his captains, and all his chariots with him : and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots. So Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, unto this day : then did Libnah revolt at the same time from under his hand : because he had forsaken the LORD, the God of his fathers.

11 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, and led Judah 12 astray. And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of 13 Asa king of Judah ; but hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like as the house of Ahab did ; and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, which were better than thy- 14 self : behold, the LORD will smite with a great plague thy people, and thy children, 15 and thy wives, and all thy substance : and thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by 16 reason of the sickness, day by day. And the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians 17 which are beside the Ethiopians : and they came up against Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives ; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of 18 his sons. And after all this the LORD smote

20 vant's sake, as he promised him to give unto him a lamp for his children alway. In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.

21 Then Joram passed over to Zair, and all his chariots with him : and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots : 22 and the people fled to their tents. So Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, unto this day. Then did Libnah revolt at 23 the same time. And the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the 24 kings of Judah? And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David : and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

25 In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign.

26 Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign ; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah the daughter (or, *granddaughter*) of Omri king of Israel. And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab : for he was 28 the son in law of the house of Ahab. And he went with Joram the son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead : and the Syrians wounded Joram.

29 And king Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

¶ 1 : 1 Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose 2 and destroyed all the seed royal. But Jehoshabea, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons that were slain, even him and his nurse, and put them in the bedchamber ; and they hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not 8 slain. And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years : and Athaliah reigned over the land.

4 And in the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the captains over hundreds, of the Carites and of the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD ; and he made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and 5 shewed them the king's son. And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do : a third part of you, that come in on the sabbath, shall be keepers of the 6 watch of the king's house ; and a third part shall be at the gate Sur ; and a third part at the gate behind the guard : so shall ye keep the watch of the house, and be a 7 barrier. And the two companies of you, even all that go forth on the sabbath, shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD 8 about the king. And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand ; and he that cometh

him in his bowels with an incurable disease.  
 19 And it came to pass, in process of time, at the end of two years, that his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness, and he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years: and he departed without being desired; and they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

22 : 1 And the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned. Forty and two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Athaliah the daughter (or, *granddaughter*) of Omri. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father, to his destruction. He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians wounded Joram. And he returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which they had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick. Now the destruction of Ahaziah was of God, in that he went unto Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab. And it came to pass, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, that he found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, ministering to Ahaziah, and slew them. And he sought Ahaziah, and they caught him, (now he was hiding in Samaria,) and they brought him to Jehu, and slew him; and they buried him, for they said, He is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart. And the house of Ahaziah had no power to hold the kingdom.

10 Now when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in the bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

23 : 1 And in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jehoram, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him. And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the heads of fathers' houses of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath spoken concerning the sons of David.

within the ranks, let him be slain: and be ye with the king when he goeth out, and when he cometh in. And the captains over hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men, those that were to come in on the sabbath, with those that were to go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. And the priest delivered to the captains over hundreds the spears and shields that had been king David's, which were in the house of the LORD. And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, along by the altar and the house, by the king round about. Then he brought out the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king. And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the house of the LORD: and she looked, and, behold, the king stood by the pillar, as the manner was, and the captains and the trumpets by the king; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, treason. And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth between the ranks; and him that followeth her slay with the sword: for the priest said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD. So they made way for her; and she went by the way of the horses' entry to the king's house: and there was she slain.



4 This is the thing that ye shall do : a third part of you, that come in on the sabbath, of the  
 5 priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the doors ; and a third part shall be at the  
 king's house ; and a third part at the gate of the foundation : and all the people shall be in  
 6 the courts of the house of the LORD. But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the  
 priests, and they that minister of the Levites ; they shall come in, for they are holy : but all  
 7 the people shall keep the watch of the LORD. And the Levites shall compass the king round  
 about, every man with his weapons in his hand ; and whosoever cometh into the house, let  
 8 him be slain : and be ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out. So the  
 Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded : and they  
 took every man his men, those that were to come in on the sabbath, with those that were to  
 9 go out on the sabbath ; for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses. And Jehoiada the  
 priest delivered to the captains of hundreds the spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had  
 10 been king David's, which were in the house of God. And he set all the people, every man  
 with his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house,  
 11 along by the altar and the house, by the king round about. Then they brought out the king's  
 son, and put the crown upon him, and *gave him* the testimony, and made him king : and  
 12 Jehoiada and his sons anointed him ; and they said, God save the king. And when Athaliah  
 heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the  
 13 house of the LORD : and she looked, and, behold, the king stood by his pillar at the entrance,  
 and the captains and the trumpets by the king ; and all the people of the land rejoiced, and  
 blew with trumpets ; the singers also *played* on instruments of music, and led the singing of  
 14 praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, treason. And Jehoiada the priest  
 brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have  
 her forth between the ranks ; and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword : for  
 15 the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD. So they made way for her ; and she  
 went to the entry of the horse gate to the king's house : and they slew her there.

*Summary of the Section.* The story of *Jehoram* is very sad and painful, yet full of valuable suggestions. On his accession he murdered all his own brothers. As far as he could he obliterated the pure worship, the righteous laws, and excellent institutions established by his father. In their place he established the vile Baal-worship, and the foul institutions of Ahab and Jezebel, and compelled the people to fall in with idolatry and its iniquities. And the reason assigned is, that *he had Ahab's daughter as his wife*. Under the influence of three such monsters in iniquity as Ahab, Jezebel and Athaliah, it was not surprising that "he walked in the way of the kings of *Israel*, like as did the house of Ahab ; and wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord." As a written message from Elijah predicted, God punished his gross and defiant iniquity. Edom successfully revolted from his sway ; and the Philistines and Arabians invaded his capital, slew all his sons save one (because "the Lord would not destroy the house of David") and carried away his wives and his substance. And then "the Lord smote him with an incurable and agonizing disease."

A still briefer but similarly wicked reign was that of his son Ahaziah. "He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab : for *his mother* (Athaliah) was his *counsellor to do wickedly!*" "To his destruction," it is added. He was slain

by Jehu, when he allied the forces of Judah with those of his uncle Jehoram of Israel. Then his mother, Athaliah, slew all *his* children save one (whom the covenant God kept) that she might retain the sway over Judah. But a true and devout woman, daughter of Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, and wife of the faithful priest Jehoiada, saved an infant son of Ahaziah from the murderous grandmother. Six years she hid him in the Temple precincts—a place where he was safest, for God's house was unvisited and unnoticed by Athaliah.

In the seventh year of the spared infant's life, the true-hearted priest Jehoiada silently gathered the chiefs of the families of the Levites into a covenant of allegiance to the youthful king Joash. The coronation speedily followed ; and the slaying of Athaliah in the city street, as her mother Jezebel had been slain. One of the noblest and wisest characters of the Old Testament history we find in this doubly loyal priest Jehoiada, loyal to both Divine and helpless human king. And the interposition of such characters as himself and his like-hearted wife, with the providential circumstances attending the transfer of the throne from Ahaziah to Joash, are also instructive. We see how the natural flow of wickedness, by ordinary descent from father to son, was checked by the very excesses of wickedness itself ; and how a new

beginning of character, like that of Asa and Jehoshaphat, was made possible. B.

REIGN OF JEHORAM, EIGHT YEARS.

5th to 12th of Jehoram, of Israel.

2 CHRONICLES 21 ; 2 KINGS 8 : 16-24.

On the death of Jehoshaphat his son Jehoram succeeded, and thus we have a prince of the same name on each of the thrones. In the first measure of Jehoram, king of Judah, the fatal consequences of the connection with the sanguinary house of Ahab began to appear ; all his brethren were put to death without remorse. The reign which began in blood proceeded in idolatry and defeat, till the fearful doom, denounced in a letter sent by the prophet Elisha, was entirely fulfilled. The kingdom suffered a fatal blow in the revolt of Edom, and the loss of their remaining seaport on the Red Sea. Nor was this the end of Jehoram's calamities ; the Philistines and Arabians invaded the country, surprised his palace, captured his seraglio, and slew all his sons but one. Jehoram himself died of a painful and loathsome disease, so little honored that he was not buried in the sepulchre of the kings ; Ahaziah, his son, succeeded. *Milman.*

**2 Chron. 21 : 1.** Jehoshaphat's son and successor, Jehoram, was made king in conjunction with his father, before Jehoshaphat's death (2 K. 9 : 16). But this could only have been done just at the close of Jehoshaphat's reign. For it was in the fourth year of Ahab that Jehoshaphat began to reign. Ahab reigned twenty-two years. So that eighteen years of Jehoshaphat's reign were over when Ahab died. Ahaziah of Israel reigned two years, and it was in the fifth year of Joram, the brother and successor of Ahaziah in Israel, that Jehoshaphat joined his son with him in the kingdom. So that, unless the years are not complete years, it must have been in the closing years of his father's reign that Jehoram began his joint reign. *Lumby.*—Jehoram's sole reign now began. He had been previously associated in the kingdom by his father. His eight years (verse 5) must be counted from the time of his association, in his father's twenty-third year.

**3. With fenced cities.** Jehoshaphat pursued the same policy as Rehoboam in the endowment and settlement of his sons (see chap. 11 : 28), but apparently went further by actually making over to them the "fenced cities" in which they dwelt. This, it is probable, provoked the jealousy of Jehoram, and induced

him to put them to death. Athaliah's influence may also have been used to remove those who might have interfered with her ambitious projects. B. C.

**4.** Jehoshaphat had placed his six younger sons in fortified cities of Judah, besides giving them large presents in gold, silver, and jewels, while he gave the kingdom to Jehoram. But as soon as Jehoshaphat was dead, Jehoram murdered all his brothers—the first example of that abominable mode of avoiding a disputed succession. P. S.

**6. Daughter of Ahab.** This marriage of Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, with Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, must have been early enough so that Ahaziah, the son of it, could become twenty-two years old at the time of his accession (2 K. 8 : 18, 25, 26 ; 9 : 29, etc.) ; and late enough for Jehoram and Athaliah to be of sufficient age to marry ; it cannot have been much earlier or later than the sixth or seventh year of Jehoshaphat. W. J. B.

The introduction of idolatry into *Israel*, and its open establishment by Ahab and Jezebel, may be regarded as the turning-point in the destiny of that kingdom. It was the sin unto national death. And we may look upon the marriage of Jehoram of Judah with the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, followed by the establishment of idolatry in *Judah*, as a turning-point in its history. The idolatrous worship then publicly set up never afterward lost its hold upon a large part both of the chiefs and people. Heathen gods were worshipped by royal authority in both capitals, Samaria and Jerusalem ; heathen priests and prophets were protected and honored ; the priests and prophets of Jehovah were neglected, despised, and in some instances put to death. This was a crime against the majesty of Jehovah, both as their God and their King, which He did not pardon. From this national apostasy there was not, in either kingdom, any real recovery. *Andrews.*

**10.** The author of Chronicles adds nothing in the way of fact, but, on the contrary, is rather less full than his predecessor in Kings. He, however, in his favorite manner, appends the reflection that the calamities which he relates in verses 8-10 befell Jehoram "because he had forsaken the Lord God of his fathers."

**11. Moreover he made high places.** The writer of Kings only tells us in general terms that Jehoram "did evil in the sight of the Lord," and "walked in the way of the house of Ahab." Here, in verses 11 and 13, we have particulars of his idolatry. Jehoram, it seems, seduced by the evil influence of his

wife—Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab—introduced into Judah the Baal-worship which Ahab had introduced into Israel. Idolatrous altars were established in various high places—groves, images and pillars were no doubt set up—and the people were not only allowed, but compelled to take part in the new rites. “To commit fornication” is a common metaphor, signifying idolatry or spiritual unfaithfulness. B. C.

**12. There came a writing to him from Elijah.** Nothing is more natural than to think that Elijah, as a prophet, anticipated the character of Jehoram and the nature of his reign; that, as the future rose before him in prophetic vision, he beheld the wickedness of that king, and the evil that he would do; and that thus he was led to address to him a warning which, preserved in the mean time among his prophetic writings, or among the other writings in the schools of the prophets, might be handed to him for whom it was intended when the fitting moment came. W. M.

**12-15.** No calamity can be thought of which did not befall this wicked prince; his kingdom being destroyed and depopulated by the fiercest nations, his treasures ransacked, his wives carried into captivity, his children slain, himself laboring for two years under a sore disease, and deprived at his death of the honor of royal sepulture (verse 19). All these calamities were denounced against him in the writing sent to him in the name of Elijah, that he might not think they came by chance, but by the special direction of Almighty God, as a punishment for his impieties. *Bp. Patrick.*

The former part of the prophecy had its fulfilment at the time of the Philistine and Arab invasion (verse 17); and later on, after he had reigned six years and reached the age of thirty-eight (verse 19), “the Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease,” and for two years he suffered grievously, dying at the age of forty, and “departing without being desired” (verse 20). He “was buried with his fathers in the city of David;” but, according to the writer of Chronicles, “not in the sepulchres of the kings.” The usual honor of a public funeral was also denied him—“his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers” (verse 19). Altogether his reign was one of the darkest and most unfortunate in the entire course of Judean history, marked by disaster abroad, irreligion at home, and a combination of weakness and wickedness in the monarch. G. R.—He died in the twelfth year of Jehoram, king of Israel, and was succeeded by his son Ahaziah. P. S.

REIGN OF AHAZIAH, OF JUDAH, ONE YEAR.

### 19th Year of Jehoram, of Israel.

2 CHRONICLES 22 : 1-9 ; 2 KINGS 8 : 25-29.

*Outline of his Brief Career.* The captivity and death (2 Chron. 22 : 1) of all his elder brothers gave the throne of Judah to Ahaziah, the youngest of the sons of Jehoram, who by some accident had escaped the danger of the Arab incursion. His age at his accession was no more than twenty-two. Naturally he fell, even more completely than his father, under the influence of the imperious Athaliah, in whom the spirit of her mother, Jezebel, seemed to live again, and who, as Queen-Mother, held a most important position at the Jewish court. “His mother,” we are expressly told (2 Chron. 22 : 3), “was his counsellor to do wickedly.” The Baal-worship, begun under Jehoram, was, by Athaliah’s influence, extended and advanced in honor; the Temple worship was suppressed, the Temple itself treated with violence (2 Chron. 24 : 7), and precious ornaments and offerings, once dedicated to Jehovah, and placed reverently within the Temple limits, were torn rudely from the sacred building, and transferred to the sanctuary of Baal, where the court worshipped, prostrating themselves before the images of the Baalim. The sanctuary was committed to the care of its own high-priest, Mattan, who probably took the place of the Aaronic high-priest in the court ceremonial and the national ceremonies. In political affairs Ahaziah allowed his uncle, Jehoram of Israel, his mother’s brother, to guide his conduct. At the request of Jehoram, he accompanied him in his expedition against Ramoth-Gilead, when the city was at last captured and reoccupied. From Ramoth-Gilead he returned to his capital; but subsequently, on the return of Jehoram to Jezreel to be healed of his wounds, Ahaziah made the journey from Jerusalem to Jezreel to visit his sick relative. He had prolonged his visit to the time when Jehu, freshly anointed by Elisha’s messenger, brought the news of his own rebellion to the Israelite court, and taking Jehoram unawares, slew him with his own hand (2 K. 9 : 24). Ahaziah had just time to turn and fly; but he was pursued by Jehu’s orders, overtaken, and wounded to the death. His servants conveyed the dead body to Jerusalem, where it was laid with all due honors in the sepulchre of the kings (*ibid.*, verse 28). G. R.

**2 Chron. 22 : 2.** *Ahaziah*, the sixth king of Judah, was twenty-two years old at his ac-

cession, and reigned only one year. Being the son of Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, he was nephew to Jehoram, king of Israel, a conjunction which threatened the establishment of idolatry in both kingdoms; for Ahaziah was addicted to all the evil practices of the house of Ahab. But, as if the presence of Ahab's grandson on the throne of David had filled up the measure of God's forbearance, both kings were cut off by one stroke. P. S. (See Reign of Jehoram of Israel, Section 17.)

**Forty and two years.** This number is impossible, since Ahaziah's father, Jehoram, was but forty when he died. We must read twenty-two for forty-two, and thus bring the passage into agreement with 2 K. 8 : 26. G. R. —Current opinion, as represented in the articles in Smith's Bible Dictionary, in the Lange commentaries, the Speaker's Commentary, etc., regards the chronological numerals given in this part of the Bible as very corrupt. My own studies lead me to a different conclusion. The forty-two of 2 Chron. 22 : 2 should, of course, be twenty-two, as it is in Kings. To understand these numbers, the following points should be noted : 1. The year, in these narratives, is not properly a measure of time, but is the period between two spring equinoxes. A given number of years is the number of such periods wholly or partly covered by the event mentioned. It may or may not agree with the actual measure of the time. Jesus lay in the grave three days, though the whole time of His lying there was less than the length of two days. 2. When a king died during a year, the whole year was counted to his reign. Sometimes the same year was also counted to his successor. When it was not so counted, the successor might actually reign several months before his "first year" began. 3. When a king is said to have come to the throne in a certain year of another king, the beginning of his first year may coincide with either the beginning of the specified year of the other king, or with the close of that year. W. J. B. (See Section 3.)

**6. Azariah.** The writer of Chronicles calls this prince indifferently Jehoahaz and Ahaziah. In this place the present text has Azariah; but this is probably a corruption. Jehoahaz and Ahaziah are equivalent names, composed of identically the same elements, the only difference being that the order of the two roots is inverted. A similar inversion is found later in the history, where the same king is called indifferently Jechon-iah and Jeho-iachin. Ahaziah is the only form of the name used by the writer of Kings.

**7. The destruction of Ahaziah was of God.** It is not meant that there was anything supernatural in the circumstances of Ahaziah's death, but only that his untimely end was in fact a judgment upon him for his idolatry. Divine providence, working by natural causes, brought it about that his visit to Jehoram should fall exactly at the time of Jehu's revolt, whence it came to pass that he was involved in his uncle's destruction. B. C.

**9.** The fate of the king of Judah is variously related. According to the account in the Chronicles, he fled to Samaria when Joram was killed, was found hidden there, and was brought to Jehu, who put him to death, but granted him an honorable burial from respect to the memory of Jehoshaphat. The narrative in Kings certainly conveys the impression at first sight that Jehu, after mortally wounding Joram, turned to pursue the king of Judah (a step improbable in itself, and inconsistent with the rest of the same narrative), and that Ahaziah was mortally wounded at the pass of Gur, near Ibleam, and died when he reached Megiddo. This pursuit may have taken place in consequence of his being pointed out to Jehu while attempting to escape from Samaria, but we cannot expect to clear up every difficulty in such brief and ancient histories. This much is clear, that his body was carried to Jerusalem and buried in the sepulchre of the kings. P. S.

REIGN OF ATHALIAH, QUEEN MOTHER, SIX YEARS.

#### 1st to 7th of Jehu, of Israel.

2 CHRONICLES 22 : 10-12; 23 : 1-15; 2 KINGS 11 : 1-16.

With the accession of Jehu and the destruction of the house of Ahab, and with the ill-fated alliance between the doomed race of Ahab and the descendants of David, the last period in the history of Israel and Judah's national decline had begun. The measure was not only full, but the Hand hitherto lifted in threatening was no longer stayed. We have reached a period of judgments when each follows the other with only brief intermission. Of the events in Israel connected with the rebellion of Jehu, of the character of the religious changes introduced by him, and of the troubles and difficulties of the military monarchy which he founded, we recall only these points : 1. The literal fulfilment of the prophetic predictions concerning the house of Ahab. 2. The reaction from Baal-worship to the calf-worship of

Jeroboam. But the full import of these events will only be perceived as we mark their direct and indirect influence on the history of Judah. The union between Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, and Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, had introduced apostasy, and brought calamity to the house of David. If the marriage had been planned from political motives, perhaps in the hope of an ultimate reunion of the two kingdoms, or at least with the expectation of a firm and close alliance between them, the result speedily showed the folly of attempting to achieve imaginary successes by subordinating principle to so-called policy. Indeed, this is one of the lessons which throughout make the history of Israel typical of that of the Church, and in a sense of all history, and which constitute its claim to the designation of "prophetic." In its events move, so to speak, in step with the utterances of the God of Israel. No direct or sudden interference seems necessary; but in the regular succession of events, each deviation from Divine order and rule, each attempt to compass results by departure from God's law and word, brings with it not success, but failure and ruin. From her entrance into her new home in Judah to her seizure of its throne Athaliah brought it only evil. She was her son's "counsellor to do wickedly," and her influence for evil must have commenced in the previous reign of her husband, Jehoram. To the influence of "the house of Ahab" are expressly traced, both in the reign of Jehoram and in that of Ahaziah, the revival of idolatry, the desecration of the Temple of Jehovah (2 Chron. 24 : 7) and those evil counsellings (2 Chron. 22 : 4) which brought such Divine judgments (2 Chron. 18, 14, 16, 17 ; 22 : 7). To her, we cannot doubt, was due not only the slaughter of his "brethren," with which Jehoram stained the beginning of his reign (2 Chron. 21 : 4), but the destruction by Jehu of so large a number of the remaining royal princes of Judah (2 Chron. 22 : 7, 8). And if her murderous purpose on seizing the government had been wholly successful, the political union between the house of Ahab and that of Jehoshaphat would have ended in the extermination of the whole house of David. There is not a scene in Jewish history more vividly depicted than that of Athaliah's seizure of the Jewish crown, and of her miserable end. It seems more than likely that on his ill-fated expedition to the court of Israel Jehoram had entrusted the government of the kingdom to his mother, who had all along exercised such determining influence upon him. A. E.

**2 Chron. 22 : 10.** Athaliah had inherited the spirit of Jezebel, her mother. As wife of Jehoram and mother of Ahaziah she had guided both the internal and the external policy of the Jewish kingdom; she had procured the establishment of the worship of Baal in Judea (2 K. 8 : 18, 27), and had maintained a close alliance with the sister kingdom (*ibid.*, verse 29 ; 10 : 13). The revolution effected by Jehu touched her nearly. It struck away from her the entire support which she derived from the power and grandeur of her relatives and their readiness to help her at need. It isolated her religious system, severing the communication with Phœnicia. Moreover, the death of Ahaziah deprived her of her legal status in Judea, which was that of *Gebirah*, or Queen-Mother, and transferred that position to the chief wife of her deceased son. Under these circumstances, which might well have daunted even a woman of more than ordinary courage, Athaliah's hereditary spirit and energy asserted itself. Instead of yielding to the storm, or merely standing on the defensive, she resolved to become the assailant, and before any plans could be formed against her, to strike. In the absence of her son, hers was probably the chief authority at Jerusalem. She used it to command the immediate destruction of all the seed royal—that is, of all Ahaziah's sons and nephews, thus (as she believed) entirely exterminating the family of David, which had been already thinned by previous massacres (2 Chron. 21 : 4, 17 ; 2 K. 10 : 14). She then seized the throne.

**11, 12.** Jehoiaza, the high-priest, was married to Jehosheba, a sister—probably a half-sister only—of Ahaziah, who in virtue of her near relationship had free access to the royal palace, and was there when Athaliah made her attempt to destroy the entire seed royal. Powerless to thwart the will of the Queen-Mother, Jehosheba nevertheless contrived to prevent its full accomplishment by secreting one of the children of the late king, an infant boy who had received the name of Joash. The child remained concealed in the sacred edifice for six entire years, without the queen having the slightest suspicion of his existence.

**23 : 1-15.** On a certain Sabbath day, Jehoiaza, having first made an arrangement with the captains of the royal body-guard, whom he secretly introduced into the Temple, showed the young prince, and bound by oath to espouse his cause, brought to the Temple a strong body of Levites (2 Chron. 23 : 1-8), and at the same time concentrated on the spot four out of the five divisions of the body-guard, one

being left to guard the palace. A stand or platform was prepared, on which the king was to take his place, so that he might be visible to all; and the soldiers, to whom Jehoiada distributed arms that had belonged to David out of the Temple armory, were ordered to kill any one who attempted to penetrate their ranks. Everything being prepared, the high-priest, amid general expectation, "brought forth the king's son" (2 K. 11 : 12), placed him on his pedestal, and then solemnly put upon his head "the crown and the Testimony." The crown, or diadem, was probably a gold band studded with jewels; the Testimony must have been a "Book of the Law"—probably that which was kept ordinarily in the Ark of the Covenant (De. 31 : 26). Finally, the holy oil was brought out, and the young prince anointed with it by Jehoiada and his sons, who at the same time raised the cry—"Long live the king"—which was taken up by the bystanders, guards, Levites and people, and swelled into a shout that rent the air and was heard afar. Meantime, the trumpets blared, the cymbals clashed, the singers raised hymns of praise; the entire multitude that filled the Temple courts joined in the celebration, and with loud acclaim hailed the Davidic king. Suddenly, in the midst of the deafening roar, Athaliah entered. At a glance she saw that all was lost, and rending her robes, she cried out, "Conspiracy! conspiracy!" and turned away. Jehoiada bade the soldiers let her retire, but follow her up, and as soon as she was outside the Temple, put her to death. His orders were executed, and Athaliah, escorted by the body-guard through the long array of armed Levites and exulting mul-

titudes untouched and unharmed, passed out by the "horse gate" into the Tyropæon valley, and there met her death. Thus perished Athaliah, the last survivor of the house of Omri, so far as we know—a bold, bad woman, but one whose unblenching courage compels our respect. G. R.

**14, 15.** There needs no formal seat of justice in so apparent offence. Jehoiada passes the sentence of death upon her: "Have her forth; let her not be slain in the house of the Lord; and him that followeth her kill with the sword." Had not this usurpation been palpable, Jehoiada would not have presumed to intermeddle; now, being both the priest of God and uncle and protector to the lawful king, he doth that out of the necessity of the state which his infant sovereign, if he could have been capable of those thoughts, would have desired. How like is Athaliah to her mother, Jezebel; as in conditions and carriage, so even in death: both killed violently; both killed under their own walls; both slain with treason in their mouths; both slain in the entrance of a changed government; one trod on by the horses, the other slain in the horse-gate! Both paid their own blood for the innocent blood of others. *Bp. H.*

The two accounts supplement each other, the writer of Chronicles, as usually, telling the part which the priesthood sustained in the national rising, while the writer of the Book of Kings simply relates the part taken by the secular power. Thus the one narrates what was specially done by the Levites, the other what by the military; yet each also giving indications of the co-operation of the other actors. A. E.

## Section 35.

REIGN OF JOASH OR JEHOASH, FORTY YEARS.

**7th of Jehu to 1st of Jehoash, of Israel.**

2 CHRONICLES 23 : 16-21 ; 24 : 1-27.

**23 : 16** AND Jehoiada made a covenant between himself, and all the people, and the king, that they should be the LORD's people.  
**17** And all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan  
**18** the priest of Baal before the altars. And

2 KINGS 11 : 17-21 ; 12 : 1-21.

**11 : 17** AND Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people; between the king also and the people. And all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and

Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD under the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none which was unclean in any thing should enter in. And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the upper gate unto the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom. So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet: and they slew Athaliah with the sword.

24:1 Joash was seven years old when he began to reign; and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. And Joash did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters. And it came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to restore the house of the LORD. And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not. And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the tax of Moses the servant of the LORD, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tent of the testimony? For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon the Baalim. So the king commanded, and they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the LORD. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in for the LORD the tax that Moses the servant of God laid upon Israel in the wilderness. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. And it was so, that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites,

slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD. And he took the captains over hundreds, and the Carites, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard unto the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings. So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet: and they slew Athaliah with the sword at the king's house.

21 Jehoash was seven years old when he began to reign. In the seventh year of Jehu began Jehoash to reign; and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem and his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. And Jehoash did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. Howbeit the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

4 And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the hallowed things that is brought into the house of the LORD, in current money, the money of the persons for whom each man is rated, and all the money that it cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD, let the priests take it to them, every man from his acquaintance: and they shall repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found. But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. 7 Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore take no more money from your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. And the priests consented that they should take no more money from the people, neither repair the breaches of the house. But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD. And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags and told the money that was found in the house of the LORD. And they

and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the chief priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to its place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered 12 money in abundance. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD; and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the LORD, and also such as wrought iron and brass to repair the 13 house of the LORD. So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set up the house of God in 14 its state, and strengthened it. And when they had made an end, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada. But Jehoiada waxed old and was full of days, and he died; an hundred and thirty years old 16 was he when he died. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and 17 toward God and his house. Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the 18 king hearkened unto them. And they forsook the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols: and wrath came upon Judah and 19 Jerusalem for this their guiltiness. Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. And 20 the spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath 21 also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court 22 of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look 23 upon it, and require it. And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the army of the Syrians came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of 24 Damascus. For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men; and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD, the 25 God of their fathers. So they executed judgement upon Joash. And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against

gave the money that was weighed out into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, that wrought upon the house 12 of the LORD, and to the masons and the hewers of stone, and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid 13 out for the house to repair it. But there were not made for the house of the LORD cups of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house 14 of the LORD: for they gave that to them that did the work, and repaired therewith 15 the house of the LORD. Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to give to them that did the work: for they dealt faithfully. 16 The money for the guilt offerings, and the money for the sin offerings, was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'. 17 Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem. 18 And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and of the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from 19 Jerusalem. Now the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the 20 kings of Judah? And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and smote Joash at the house of Millo, *on the way* that goeth 21 down to Silla. For Jozacar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, smote him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.



him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died : and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the 26 kings. And these are they that conspired against him ; Zabad the son of Shimeath the 27 Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith the Moabitess. Now concerning his sons, and the greatness of the burdens *laid* upon him, and the rebuilding of the house of God, behold, they are written in the commentary of the book of the kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

**JEHOIADA'S COVENANT BETWEEN THE LORD,  
THE KING AND THE PEOPLE.**

2 *Chronicles* 23 : 16-21 ; 2 *Kings* 11 : 17-20.

JEHOIADA completed the second part of the royal installation by a twofold solemn act, of which the first consisted in a covenant by which the new king and the people bound themselves to renewed allegiance to Jehovah ; while by the second the king similarly bound himself to the people, no doubt to rule in accordance with the law as laid down in the Book of Deuteronomy (2 K. 11 : 17). The ancient God-appointed constitution in Church and State having thus been re-established, the new king was conducted in state to the palace by the principal entrance, and formally enthroned. It was probably after this that the people proceeded to the house of Baal, wholly destroying it and its altars and images, and slaying Mattan, the priest of Baal. The religious reformation thus inaugurated was completed by the appointment of the officials required to superintend and carry on the orderly worship of the temple as we infer from 2 Chron. 23 : 18, 19, in accordance with the arrangements originally made by David, but which had since fallen into desuetude. And the whole account of this religious revolution concludes with this significant record : " And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet." A. E.

After the coronation of Joash, described in the last section, Jehoiada, whose position seems to have given him the regency without any need of formal appointment, took the opportunity of the great gathering in the Temple, and the general exaltation of feeling produced by the events of the day, to bind the people afresh to God by a solemn league and covenant, so that " the joyous festival of homage to the young king became on this occasion identical with that of renewed allegiance to Jehovah." Such a solemn covenant had been first made by the nation at Sinai (Ex. 24 : 3-8) ; but there had been a repetition of it in the fifteenth year of Asa (2 Chron. 15 : 9-15) after the half apostasy of Rehoboam and Abijam ; and Jehoiada now, either following this example, or moved by his own feeling of what was right and fitting,

caused the nation for the third time to renew the sacred engagement. Later in the history, Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29 : 10) and Josiah (*ibid.*, 34 : 41) did the same, regarding such solemn renewal of obligations as necessary, or at any rate appropriate, whenever the nation generally had fallen away from God and lapsed into idolatry. G. R.

**REIGN OF JOASH.**

2 *Chronicles* 24 : 1-27 ; 2 *Kings* 12 : 1-31.

The reign of Joash, king of Judah, extended over the unusually long period of forty years. Acceding to the throne in the seventh year of Jehu, king of Israel, he survived not only that monarch and his son and successor, Jehoahaz, but also witnessed the accession of Jehoash of Israel. A. E.

**2. All the days of Jehoiada.** Jehoiada lived after the accession of Joash at least twenty-three years (2 K. 12 : 6), probably twenty-five or thirty. Thus the idolatries of Joash were confined to his last ten or fifteen years.

**1 K. 12:2. All his days, wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.** Nothing more is told us of the minority of Jehoash. But we may gather from this, that Jehoiada was, practically speaking, regent while it lasted. An increase of power to the priestly order was the natural consequence of this new position of the chief priest of the nation. We shall find Jehoiada shortly (see verse 10) bearing the revived and important title of " high priest ;" and the Levitical order will be seen from this time to be more mixed up with public affairs and to have greater influence than previously. The title of " high" or " chief priest" is passed on to Jehoiada's successors (2 Chron. 26 : 20 ; 31 : 10 ; 34 : 9, etc.), who trace their office to him rather than to Aaron (Jer. 29 : 26). Jehoiada must have been regent for at least ten or twelve years. One of his last governmental acts, apparently, was to " take for Jehoash two wives," Jehoaddan of Jerusalem and another. The marriage with Jehoaddan must have taken place at least as early as Jehoash's twenty-first year, since Amaziah was born when his father was twenty-two.

**3. But the high places were not taken away.** See the same formula used 1 K. 15 : 14 ; 22 : 48 ; 2 K. 14 : 4 ; 15 : 4, 35. The worship seems to have continued uninterruptedly to the time of Hezekiah, who abolished it (2 K. 18 : 4). It was, however, again established by Manasseh, his son (2 K. 21 : 3). The priests at this time cannot have regarded it as idolatrous, or Jehoiada would have put it down during his regency. B. C.

**2 Chron. 24 : 4, 5.** *The first direction of Joash to the priests and Levites.* After the enthronement of Joash, Jehoiada engaged the people in the overthrow of Baal's worship, and the restoration of the worship of Jehovah. During the king's childhood and youth, this wise and loyal uncle and priest permanently re-established the temple service ; and probably reorganized the methods of instruction and the tribunals instituted by Jehoshaphat. The purpose of Joash, here referred to, concerning the repairs of the house of the Lord, was formed some years after his reign began ; after his marriage (verse 3). During the three reigns of Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah, the Temple had been neglected, despoiled, and in part destroyed to its foundations. "The money collected to keep it in repair had been misappropriated to the worship of Baal." The priests and Levites had exclusive care of the Temple and of worship. The king therefore, at the outset, instructed *them to collect* special annual revenues from the people ; and *themselves to expend* these moneys year by year upon the repair of the Lord's house. But his direction was not regarded. Up to the twenty-third year of the king's reign nothing was done (2 K. 12 : 6).

**4. He was minded to restore the house of the Lord.** This restoration of the Temple building and its ritual, furniture and order seems to have been the entire extent of the so-called "reformation" of Joash. No word is said about spiritual service, or even of any interest in the external offerings of priesthood and people. B.—The notable act of the reign of Joash was the restoration of the Temple. The need for it arose not so much from the age of the building, which had only been completed about a hundred and thirty years before, as from the damage done to it by the family of Athaliah, and the forcible appropriation for the service of Baalim of all that had been dedicated to the house of Jehovah (2 Chron. 24 : 7). A. E.

**6, 7. Joash calls Jehoiada to account for delay in the work of repair.** We are in ignorance of

the reason for the neglect of the priests and Levites and the failure of their "chief" in this matter. The only probable solution is that it required time and a fresh education of the people to bring them up to a necessary spirit of willingness to give for such an object ; and that the priests would not risk their own support by pressing an unwilling constituency for *more* than this support required. At least it is safe to make this supposition from a similar state of things sometimes appearing in these later days. B.

The Bible represents the building and repairing of the Lord's house as acts of eminent piety. The historian says of Joash in the context that he was a godly man as long as he had the guidance of the celebrated priest Jehoiada. Yet the only thing thought worthy of mention in that part of his reign is that "he was minded to repair the house of the Lord." The associations of the Lord's house are an incalculable help to the culture of religious character. We are creatures of association. We are moved more profoundly than we think by our surroundings. The recollection of our experiences in the house of God may be among the most precious treasures that memory hoards. A. Phelps.

**2 Chron. 24 : 8-11.** *How the work of collection was successfully achieved.* The king took it in hand now, and separated it entirely from the regularly gathered revenues for the support of the Temple service. He had a new treasure chest made, and set it at the gate, but *outside* the precincts of the Lord's house. Proclamation was then made through Judah and Jerusalem that the collection originally ordered by Moses in the wilderness for the building of the Lord's tabernacle was again required in behalf of the Lord's house. The king then appointed separate collectors and custodians of the treasure, and his own high officers, with one of the high priest's, emptied the chest in his own palace. And very speedily, willingly, and joyfully did the princes and all the people cast into the chest, until it had been many times filled and emptied, and "money was gathered in abundance." B.

Spontaneous gifts are implied by the tone of verse 10, which lays stress on the gladness of the offerers. That is the incense which adds fragrance to our gifts. Grudging service is no service, and money given for ever so religious a purpose, without gladness because of the opportunity of giving, is not, in the deepest sense, given at all. Love is a longing to give to the beloved, and whoever truly loves God

will know no keener delight than surrender for His dear sake. Pecuniary contributions for religious purposes afford a rough but real test of the depth of a man's religion; but it is one available only for himself, since the motive, and not the amount, is the determining element. We all need to bring our hearts more under the influence of God's love to us, that our love to Him may be increased, and then to administer possessions, under the impulse of giving gladly which enkindled love will always excite. Superheated steam has most expansive power and driving force. These glad givers may remind us not only of the one condition of acceptable giving, but also of the need for clear and worthy objects, and of obvious disinterestedness in those who seek for money to help good causes. The smallest opening for suspicion that some of it sticks to the collector's fingers is fatal, as it should be. A. M.

**12, 13.** *How the money was disbursed and the work done.* As the king and the high priest received it, so, under their direction, it was disbursed to the artisans and laborers, through appointed overseers or foremen. And the house of God was restored to its original completeness and beauty. The excess of contributed treasure was used to provide vessels of gold and silver for the Temple service. B.

**2 K. 12:15.** It is a noble testimony borne concerning these men who did the part of overseers in the work of the Temple, that they did not need to be reckoned with, "for they dealt faithfully." They were men of probity and honor who conscientiously looked after the men set under them, seeing that the work committed to their care was properly done. There is a sphere for faithfulness in the discharge of every kind of duty. Carlyle says of Louis XV., "His wide France, look at it from the fixed stars, is no wider than thy narrow brickfield, where thou, too, didst faithfully or didst unfaithfully. It is not thy works, which are all mortal, infinitely little, and the greatest no greater than the least, but only the spirit thou workest in that can have worth or continuance." *They were faithful in their money dealings*—so faithful that it was not felt necessary to keep a strict reckoning with them as to their expenditure upon the workmen. It was only a very high degree of integrity which would warrant it. As a rule, it is wise to keep account even with those whose integrity we do not dispute. It is added that the revenues which properly belonged to the priests, the trespass money and sin money, were not touched for the purpose of the repairs. Neither

was the money given for the restoration of the building applied, until the repairs were completed, to purchase new vessels for the sanctuary. A regard for justice is thus observable throughout the whole of these dealings. J. O. — "Faithful" work is prosperous work. As verse 13 picturesquely says, "Healing went up upon the work;" and the Temple was restored to its old, fair proportions, and stood strong as before. Where there is conscientious effort God's blessing is not withheld. Labor "in the Lord" can never be labor "in vain," though even a prophet may often be tempted, in a moment of weary despondency, to complain, "I have labored in vain." We may not see the results, nor have the workmen's joy of beholding the building rise, course by course, under our hands, but we shall see one day, though now we have to work in the dark. A. M.

**2 Chron. 24:15, 16.** As regards the movement in the southern kingdom of Judah, Old Testament history does not present a nobler figure than that of Jehoiada, whether viewed as priest or patriot. Faithful to his religion, despite his connection with the house of Jehoram and the temptations which it would involve, he dared to rescue the infant prince and to conceal him for six years at the risk of his life. There cannot be doubt that the occupancy of the throne by Athaliah was not only an usurpation and a crime, but contrary to the law and constitution of the land. Yet in bringing about a change which was strictly legal, Jehoiada acted in the most careful manner, having first consulted with, and secured the cooperation of, all the estates of the realm. Similarly, the execution of the plan was entrusted to those to whom action in the matter naturally belonged; and if the high priest marked the accession of the new king by a covenant between him and the people and Jehovah, he was at least equally careful to secure the constitutional rights and liberties of the people by another covenant between them and their sovereign. Lastly, in the period that followed, Jehoiada used his position and influence only in favor of what was best, and not at any time for lower or selfish purposes. To this record of his life we have to add his activity in connection with the restoration of the Temple. We do not wonder that when he died at a patriarchal age, the unparalleled honor was accorded him of a burial not only in Jerusalem itself, where, according to tradition, there were no burying-places, but "in the city of David" and "among the kings," because he had done

good in Israel, and toward God and His house" verse 16). A. E.

**17-22.** A most unhappy change ensued. The princes of Judah, who had doubtless been jealous of the high priest's unbounded influence, seem to have persuaded the king that it was time to be his own master; and the first use that he and they made of this new liberty was to neglect the house of Jehovah, and to serve groves and idols. But not without warning and remonstrance. At this point of the history occurs that remarkable passage which introduces the line of prophets whose writings remain to us, and who began to appear about this time, Elisha being still alive: "Yet He sent prophets unto them, to bring them again unto Jehovah; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear." Nay more, by adding to their sins the blood of the martyr whom Christ names with "righteous Abel"—both victims to the passion that knows the truth and hates it—they made themselves a type of the generation that slew the Lord. The Spirit of Jehovah came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, and probably high priest, who told them that they could not prosper, because they had forsaken God; and even in the court of the sanctuary, which they were perhaps attempting to profane by a sacrifice to Baal, they stoned him to death, by the king's order, between the Temple and the altar. This was the very space within which Joash had been guarded by Jehoiada and his line of Levites; and the narrative lays stress on the king's ingratitude to the son of the man who had saved his life. The dying cry of Zechariah, "Jehovah, look upon it, and require it," never ceases to echo through the annals of the Jews, till they "filled up the measure of their fathers" by invoking the guilt of Christ's blood upon their heads. Meanwhile, it found an immediate response in the calamities that followed. P. S.

The sanction of the king to the introduction of idolatry in Judah soon brought, in the Divine order of things, its national punishment. But here also Divine mercy first interposed by admonitions and warnings sent through His prophets (2 Chron. 24: 19). Among these we have probably to include Joel, whose prophecies were probably uttered in the period of hopeful revival which characterized the first part of the reign of Joash. But now the warnings of the prophets were not only left unheeded: they called forth violent opposition. Still, prophets might be borne with because of their extraordinary mission and message. It was otherwise when the high priest Zechariah,

the son—or, rather, grandson—of Jehoiada, standing in his official capacity in the court of the priests, addressed the people gathered beneath in the lower court speaking in similar language, under the overpowering influence of the Spirit of God. The princes and people conspired; and at the command of the king, unmindful not only of his duty to God, but even of the gratitude he owed to his former preserver and counsellor, the grandson of Jehoiada was stoned to death "between the Temple and the altar." All things combined to mark this as a crime of no ordinary guilt, specially typical of what befell the last and greatest prophet of Israel, the Christ of God. The death inflicted on Zechariah was that which the law had appointed for idolatry and blasphemy (Lev. 20: 2; 24: 23). Thus the murderers of the high priest, as those of Christ, unrighteously inflicted the punishment which was due to themselves. Again, in the one case as in the other, the crime was provoked by faithful admonitions and warnings sent directly of God. In both instances the crime was national, the rulers and people having equal part in it; in both, also, it was connected with the Temple, and yet the outcome of national apostasy. Lastly, in both instances the punishment was likewise national. Yet there is marked difference also. For, as Zechariah died, "he said, Jehovah, look upon it, and require it;" while our Lord, when referring to this event as parallel to what was about to befall Him, implied no personal resentment when He uttered this prediction: "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." And yet, further, unlike the words of Zechariah, those of Christ ended not with judgment, but with the promise of His return in mercy and the prospect of Israel's repentance (Matt. 23: 39). A. E.

**21. In the court of the house of the Lord.** "Between the altar and the Temple," or directly in front of the Temple porch, if it be this Zechariah of whom our Lord speaks (Matt. 23: 35). A horror of their impious deed long possessed the Jews, who believed that the blood was not to be effaced, but continued to bubble on the stones of the court, like blood newly shed, until the Temple was entered, just prior to its destruction, by Nebuzaradan. B. C.

We conclude that our Lord (Luke 11: 51) referred to Zechariah, *the son of Jehoiada* (which is the reading in the Gospel used by the Nazarenes), who was stoned by order of Joash "in the court of the house of the Lord." That he is referred to is clear, because (1) this murder, in the order of the Jewish books, stood last in

the Old Testament ; (2) in dying, Zechariah had exclaimed, " *The Lord look upon it and require it ;*" (3) the Jews themselves had many most remarkable legends about this murder, which made a deep impression on them, and which they specially believed to have kindled God's wrath against them (2 Chron. 24 : 18). Consequently "son of Berechiah" (which is not found except in D) in Luke 11 : 51 is a very early and erroneous gloss which has crept into the text. *Farrar.*

The Lord did look upon it ; He did require it. With that deed ended the peace and prosperity of Jehoash's reign. The Syrian king, Hazael, invaded the land—the first time this power had appeared in the southern kingdom—and threatened Jerusalem. The force was small—much less than Jehoash had at his command ; but the king and his large army sustained a most disgraceful defeat ; and he then thought that he had no alternative but to buy off the Syrians by the sacrifice of the treasures and precious vessels of the Temple, as well as of the accumulations in the royal treasury. He seems to have been wounded, for it is stated that "they left him in sore diseases." But his bed screened him not from the popular indignation, inasmuch that two of his servants, reckoning upon impunity, if not applause, from the people, murdered him upon his sick-couch. That they were nearly right in this is shown by the fact that his son Amaziah, who succeeded, dared not, until some time after, "when his kingdom was established," call the murderers to account. Indeed, the nation gave its solemn posthumous judgment upon the demerits of this king's reign by refusing his corpse a place in the sepulchres of the kings, although he was allowed a tomb within the city. *Kitto.*

**2 K. 12 : 17, 18.** There was probably a considerable interval between the conclusion of the arrangement for the repairs and the Syrian expedition related in these verses. The death of Jehoiada, the apostasy of Joash and the "princes," the warnings of the prophets, and the murder of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, all fell into this space. B. C.

**2 Chron. 24 : 23, 24.** Although the Syrian force was numerically much inferior to that of Judah, the army of Joash was defeated with heavy losses. These notably included the destruction of those "princes" who had been leaders in the movement that ended in the murder of Zechariah. The Book of Chronicles is careful to mark the hand of God in a defeat which formed so striking a contrast to the vic-

tory which the Lord had given to Asa with an army greatly inferior to his enemies (2 Chron. 14 : 9, etc.). And yet this was only the beginning of judgment upon Joash. According to the account in the Book of Kings (12 : 18), Joash bought off the capture of his capital by handing to the conqueror all the hallowed things of the Temple and the treasures of the palace. A. E.

**2 K. 12 : 17-21.** Within less than a year, Hazael, the brave and warlike king of Syria, not content with the damage which he had inflicted on the northern kingdom (2 K. 10 : 32, 33), invaded the south. His main attack was on the Philistine town of Gath (*ibid.*, 12 : 17) ; but having been successful there, he suddenly resolved to make a dash upon Jerusalem. Here plunder, rather than conquest, was his object ; and when Joash, after a battle in which he was severely defeated (2 Chron. 24 : 24), offered to buy off his hostility by the sacrifice of the Temple and palace treasures, Hazael readily consented. All the stores accumulated since Asa bribed Benhadad (1 K. 15 : 18) were made over by the Jewish to the Syrian monarch as the price of peace, were brought to Hazael in Damascus. Jerusalem was allowed to escape ; but the wretched king, humiliated and disgraced, fell into a sick condition, and had to take to his bed in the castle of Millo, which he had perhaps made his residence in expectation of a siege. Here, advantage was taken of his illness by some of his attendants, who formed a conspiracy against him among those of his household, and slew him on his sick-bed. G. R.

**2 Chron. 24 : 25.** "And they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings." The slayer of the son might not sleep with that father whose memory he had so ungratefully and atrociously dishonored. So did the fair morning, for the want of depth and steadfastness of principle, give place to an evening of darkness and storm ; and the hopeful signs of early youth led into apostasy, crime, misery, disgrace, and ruin *Hallam.*

#### *Suggestions of this History.*

There are not many biographies more dramatically interesting and more practically instructive. He seems to have had the ordinary proclivities to evil, and nothing more. But he was destitute of any fixed religious principle, and he wanted constitutional firmness. He was one of those—and their name is legion—whose course is determined almost entirely by the circumstances in which they are placed and the

hands into which they fall. He had not that firmness of will which bends circumstances to itself, nor that decision of character which makes a man self-centred and resolute. Hence we find that so long as his uncle Jehoiada lived he did remarkably well, just because he was then in good hands. But no sooner was Jehoiada removed by death, and counsellors of another stamp came about him, than (being as plastic in their hands as he had been in those of his uncle) he began to diverge from the path of duty, and ultimately brought himself to a violent and untimely death.

Zeal about the outwards of religion is not necessarily religion itself. Joash had the one, but he never had the other. Perhaps he had a feeling of interest in the Temple from early associations, and the fact that it had been the means of saving his life; but that is but a poor substitute for the grace of God. And yet there are many whose religion is no better than this—a vague sentiment which has come up from the impressions of their early days, having no root of faith in the heart, and no fruit of holiness in the life. Nothing can be trusted to keep a man right, even in this world, but religious principle. A man may have a firm will, and a keen sense of the unprofitableness of sin, and these may help to keep him from open criminality; but even then he is not safe. His passions may get the better of him at some unguarded moment, and may ruin all. But when, on the other hand, as in the case of Joash, there is a facility of temperament—and a weakness of will—without the grace of God failure seems all but inevitable. The temptations are so numer-

ous in a world like this; the flatterers are so many and so busy, that where there is not a strong constitutional power of resistance, a young man is much to be felt for. But here is his refuge—he cannot change his mental and physical constitution, but he can bring into it the strength of God, and that will be more than a balance, that will uphold him in every temptation, and give him the victory over every foe. Like Joseph, he will say, “Shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” or like Nehemiah, “But so did not I, because of the fear of God.” Beware of the beginnings of evil. You cannot tell where they will end. Beware what companions you choose, and what counsellors you follow. Make the Bible your guide and heaven will be your home. *A. L. Simpson.*

*All of God's institutions* rightly demand efficient maintenance by God's people. First the *house* of worship, and next the various edifices wherein Christ is effectually ministered to in the persons of His poor and sorely afflicted.

Single-eyed earnest purpose and effort for real good, wisely directed, will evoke a responsive spirit and attain the requisite means whereby to achieve success.

Heart-giving or heart-doing always produces heart-rejoicing. Generous acting, the free, glad imparting to others of thought, of toil, of means, in the Christ-like spirit of unselfish sacrifice, brings of necessity a Christ-like joy to the Christ-loving man or woman or child. This is the interpretation of Christ's ninth beatitude, posthumously given by Paul: *It is more blessed to give!* B.

## Section 36.

REIGN OF AMAZIAH, TWENTY-NINE YEARS.

**2d of Joash to 27th of Jeroboam II., of Israel.**

2 CHRONICLES 25 : 1-28.

**25 : 1** AMAZIAH was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart. Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established unto him, that he slew

2 KINGS 14 : 1-22.

**14 : 1** IN the second year of Joash son of Joahaz king of Israel began Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah to reign. He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the

his servants which had killed the king his  
 4 father. But he put not their children to  
 death, but did according to that which is  
 written in the law in the book of Moses, as  
 the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers  
 shall not die for the children, neither shall  
 the children die for the fathers ; but every  
 5 man shall die for his own sin. Moreover  
 Amaziah gathered Judah together, and ordered  
 them according to their fathers' houses,  
 under captains of thousands and captains of  
 hundreds, even all Judah and Benjamin :  
 and he numbered them from twenty years  
 old and upward, and found them three hundred  
 thousand chosen men, able to go forth  
 to war, that could handle spear and shield.  
 6 He hired also an hundred thousand mighty  
 men of valour out of Israel for an hundred  
 7 talents of silver. But there came a man of  
 God to him, saying, O king, let not the army  
 of Israel go with thee ; for the LORD is not  
 with Israel, *to wit*, with all the children of  
 8 Ephraim. But if thou wilt go, do *valiantly*,  
 be strong for the battle : God shall cast thee  
 down before the enemy ; for God hath  
 9 power to help, and to cast down. And  
 Amaziah said to the man of God, But what  
 shall we do for the hundred talents which I  
 have given to the army of Israel? And the  
 man of God answered, The LORD is able to  
 10 give thee much more than this. Then  
 Amaziah separated them, *to wit*, the army  
 that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go  
 home again : wherefore their anger was  
 greatly kindled against Judah, and they re-  
 11 turned home in fierce anger. And Amaziah  
 took courage, and led forth his people, and  
 went to the Valley of Salt, and smote of the  
 12 children of Seir ten thousand. And *other*  
 ten thousand did the children of Judah carry  
 away alive, and brought them unto the top  
 of the rock, and cast them down from the  
 top of the rock, that they all were broken in  
 13 pieces. But the men of the army which  
 Amaziah sent back, that they should not go  
 with him to battle, fell upon the cities of  
 Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon,  
 and smote of them three thousand, and took  
 much spoil.  
 14 Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah  
 was come from the slaughter of the Edom-  
 ites, that he brought the gods of the chil-  
 dren of Seir, and set them up to be his gods,  
 and bowed down himself before them, and  
 15 burned incense unto them. Wherefore the  
 anger of the LORD was kindled against  
 Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet,

LORD, yet not like David his father : he did  
 according to all that Joash his father had  
 4 done. Howbeit the high places were not  
 taken away : the people still sacrificed and  
 5 burnt incense in the high places. And it  
 came to pass, as soon as the kingdom was  
 established in his hand, that he slew his ser-  
 vants which had slain the king his father :  
 6 but the children of the murderers he put not  
 to death : according to that which is written  
 in the book of the law of Moses, as the LORD  
 commanded, saying, The fathers shall not  
 be put to death for the children, nor the  
 children be put to death for the fathers ;  
 7 but every man shall die for his own sin. He  
 slew of Edom in the Valley of Salt ten thou-  
 sand, and took Sela by war, and called the  
 name of it Joktheel, unto this day.  
 8 Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jeho-  
 ash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king  
 of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one an-  
 9 other in the face. And Jehoash the king of  
 Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, say-  
 ing, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to  
 the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give  
 thy daughter to my son to wife : and there  
 passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon,  
 10 and trode down the thistle. Thou hast in-  
 deed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath  
 lifted thee up : glory thereof, and abide at  
 home ; for why shouldst thou meddle to *thy*  
 hurt, that thou shouldst fall, even thou,  
 and Judah with thee? But Amaziah would  
 11 not hear. So Jehoash king of Israel went  
 up ; and he and Amaziah king of Judah  
 looked one another in the face at Beth-she-  
 12 mesh, which belongeth to Judah. And Ju-  
 dah was put to the worse before Israel ; and  
 13 they fled every man to his tent. And Je-  
 hoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of  
 Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Aha-  
 ziah, at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusa-  
 lem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem  
 from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner  
 14 gate, four hundred cubits. And he took all  
 the gold and silver, and all the vessels that  
 were found in the house of the LORD, and in  
 the treasures of the king's house, the hos-  
 15 tages also, and returned to Samaria. Now  
 the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did,  
 and his might, and how he fought with  
 Amaziah king of Judah, are they not writ-  
 ten in the book of the chronicles of the kings  
 16 of Israel? And Jehoash slept with his fa-  
 thers, and was buried in Samaria with the  
 kings of Israel ; and Jeroboam his son  
 reigned in his stead.

which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which have not delivered their own people out of thine  
16 hand? And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that *the king* said unto him, Have we made thee of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

17 Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash, the son of Jehoahaz the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face.

18 And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in

Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast  
19 that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle. Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten Edom; and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to  
20 thy hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee? But Amaziah would not hear; for it was of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of *their enemies*, because  
21 they had sought after the gods of Edom. So Joash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shemesh, which belongeth to  
22 Judah. And Judah was put to the worse before Israel; and they fled every man to his tent.  
23 And Joash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from  
24 the gate of Ephraim unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits. And *he took* all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.

25 And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years. Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold,  
27 are they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel? Now from the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there.  
28 And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

**2 Chron. 25 : 1. Amaziah was twenty and five years old.** Joash died at the age of forty-seven (Chron. 24 : 1). Amaziah must therefore have been born when his father was twenty-two; and the marriage of Joash with Jehoaddan must have been, at the latest, when he was just twenty-one. B. C.

**2.** When he came to the throne he was undoubtedly attached to the worship of Jehovah, and if not of a "perfect heart," yet at any rate anxious to maintain true religion, and observe the Law in his own person. Like his father, Joash, he seems to have fallen away in later life; and at best he lacked the earnest zeal of a true religious reformer. G. R.

**2. A perfect heart.** Religion is something within you, working outward from the centre, and that centre a heart possessed by the grace of God. It is not, as too many imagine

17 And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there.

19 And they brought him upon horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of

20 David. And all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father

21 Amaziah. He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

it, a reformation commencing in the outer circumference of one's life and habits, and then working its way to the core, till the heart is reached and changed; it takes its start in the innermost recesses of our being, and from thence reaches outward, till the whole character and conduct are brought under its blissful sway. *J. T. Davidson.*

**3, 4.** Though the succession naturally devolved upon Amaziah, the late king's eldest son, and no one ventured to contest it with him, yet it was some time before his authority was generally acknowledged and his rule "established" (verse 5). When disturbance subsided the first step that he took was to arrest the murderers of his father, and to punish their crime with death. But, while thus vindicating law and right, he exhibited also what was regarded as extraordinary clemency, since he



punished only the guilty parties themselves, and did not visit their crime upon their sons, as was, in spite of the Law of Moses (De. 24 : 16), the ordinary Jewish custom.

**5-13.** His first great undertaking was the reconquest of Edom. Edom, since its revolt from Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat (2 K. 8 : 20), had been a thorn in the side of Judea, causing perpetual trouble and annoyance. Edom "did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever" (Amos 1 : 11). Southern Judea was subject to continual ravages. Towns and villages were burned; crops carried off or destroyed; trees cut down; good land marred; prisoners carried into slavery. To subdue Edom, to put an end to these losses, was worth a great and sustained effort, an effort which needed very careful preparation. Amaziah began with his own subjects. Having numbered the men capable of bearing arms through all Judah and Benjamin, from twenty years old and upward, and found them to amount to three hundred thousand, he proceeded to organize and discipline this vast host. An Israelite contingent was hired, and was on the point of setting out in company with the Judean troops to invade Edom, when a prophet, whose name is not given, and representing to Amaziah the wickedness of making common cause with an idolatrous people, threatened him with God's anger and the failure of his enterprise unless he sent the army of Israel away (7, 8). "But what," exclaimed the monarch, "shall we do for the hundred talents"—the amount of their hire—"which I have given to the army of Israel?" How shall I recoup myself for this expenditure? "The man of God answered—The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." Then, we are told, "Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again" (10); and they returned home, while he went on to the Edomite war without them. Naturally they were indignant; and on their way back through Judea to their own country vented their wrath in petty plundering of Jewish towns and villages, which was sometimes resisted, with the result that as many as three thousand Jews fell in the tumults and skirmishes (13). It was now the turn of the Judeans to feel provoked and indignant, and to cherish a grudge which they would be sure to take the first opportunity of venting. Meanwhile, Amaziah had pushed forward through southeastern Judea toward the Edomite country, and passing the border at

the southwestern angle of the Dead Sea, found the troops of Edom drawn up to meet him in the "Valley of Salt," or plain of the Sabkah, an open space between the southern shore of the sea and the high ground that separates between the Jordan depression and the Arabah. Here a decisive battle was fought, in which the Edomites suffered complete defeat, losing ten thousand men, while Amaziah's victorious host pressed upon the flying columns, and chased them to Selah, or Petra, the strange Idumæan capital amid the mountains. Selah was besieged and taken (2 K. 14 : 7), and its name contemptuously changed to Joktheel, "the subdued of God." Numerous prisoners were made, roughly reckoned at ten thousand; and these unfortunates were dragged to the brink of the cliffs for which Petra is noted, and precipitated from them into the gulf below. Edom was for the time completely cowed and subdued, while Amaziah was greatly elated at his success. G. R.

**14-16.** In obedience to the command of God (verses 7-10), Amaziah resigned the hundred talents; yet he lived in calamity and died by violence and treason. Did the Lord God, the God of goodness and truth, forsake His servant? No; the Lord forsook Amaziah because Amaziah drew back from being His servant. Amaziah, when he had destroyed the Edomites, brought with him to Jerusalem their idols; and with the infatuation which belongs to presumptuous wickedness set them up to be his gods, and burned incense to them, and worshipped them: yet the sword of Divine justice paused in its scabbard. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The Lord, instead of immediately cutting off the king in the midst of his ingratitude and impiety, was mercifully pleased to send a prophet to rebuke him and call him to repentance (verse 15). How did the king receive the message from God? When the former prophet had delivered his message Amaziah obeyed his command. But he now refused to humble himself before his Maker. His heart was obstinately fixed in apostasy. He charged the prophet with insolent obtrusiveness for daring to reprove him, and ordered him to be silent on pain of punishment (verse 16). Then the prophet, perceiving him not to be reclaimed, pronounced his doom: "I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel." Hence followed the disastrous residue of his life and his miserable end. And we may learn from his example, that no former acts of righteousness, no former

sacrifices of present interest for conscience' sake, will avail us as an excuse for indulging afterward in sin. *Gisborne.*

**17.** Amaziah, flushed with his conquests over Edom, sent a defiance to the king of Israel. Jehoash, who now filled that throne, was a politic and successful prince; after the death of the formidable Hazeel, he had reinstated his kingdom in its independence, and reconquered great part of his territory by three victories over the Syrians, which took place according to the prediction of the dying Elisha. *Milman.*

**18, 19.** Joash perfectly took the measure of his challenger, and answered him according to his folly. First, he replied by a parable. He told how the briar (or thistle) of Lebanon sent to the cedar of Lebanon, demanding that the daughter of the cedar should be given in wife to his son. But a wild beast of the forest passed by, and trode down the briar. It was meant to sting and insult the Jewish king by intimating to him that in Joash's eyes he was no more than a contemptible briar in comparison with the majestic cedars. Joash cannot be acquitted of overweening arrogance. It is a scornful, haughty spirit which breathes in his parable. From the Israelitish point of view the Ten Tribes were *the* kingdom of Israel; Judah was the isolated tribe. But the state of Israel at this time, and in the recent past, did not warrant these boastful metaphors. The cedar, as well as the briar, had been pretty well trodden down by the wild beast of the forest. This arrogant spirit, moreover, is apt to lead its possessor into the error of despising things simply because they are outwardly weak. In this case the king of Israel very justly took the boastful Amaziah's measure. But it does not always follow that the cedar has the right to lord it over the briar. Nevertheless, the parable was just in so far as Amaziah was matching himself against one who, as the event showed, was greatly his superior. Joash was by far the abler soldier, and had larger forces. Amaziah wished to show himself his equal, but lacked the power of taking a just estimate of his own capabilities. This is one of the first conditions of a man's strength—to know himself. "How many men may you meet in middle life whose career has been marked by bitter disappointments! They began with hopes which have never been realized; and so they blame what they call their adverse fate. But they have never sought to know themselves. They began in a fool's paradise, and they have never made their escape from it. A more exact and modest estimate of their own powers, a clear and honest

apprehension of their own capacity, a readiness to do the work within their limits, the work they were meant to do, and they had been spared many bitter hours." Following up his parable, Joash gave the king of Judah a piece of advice, scornfully and contemptuously expressed, but such advice as, on the whole, Amaziah would have done well to take. He touched truly enough the motive of his foolish challenge. "Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart is lifted up." A measure of success turns the heads of some people, inflates their ideas of themselves, and incapacitates them for sober calculation of the future. He bids him content himself with what he has achieved and tarry at home. The tone is most insulting, implying the most perfect contempt for Amaziah's threatened attack; but the advice was wise. Amaziah was a fool to provoke a needless war, and run himself and his kingdom into danger from a mere motive of vain-glory. He predicts to him what will happen if he persists in his foolish course. "Why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldst fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?" It perhaps was not to be expected that Amaziah should take advice so unpalatable, so tauntingly conveyed, so wounding to his pride and royal honor. But the result showed that Joash had not overstated his case. Amaziah meddled truly to his hurt, and he fell, even he and Judah with him. It is the fatality of a foolish mind that it is impregnable to considerations which would show it its folly. J. O.

Although he reigned fifteen years afterward, Amaziah never recovered the prestige which he had lost in his war with Joash. At last the long-smothered discontent broke out. A conspiracy formed against him in Jerusalem assumed such dimensions that he was led to regard resistance as hopeless, and to seek safety in flight. His place of refuge was Lachish, now Um-Lakis, on the southwestern border of Judah. This was a city of considerable strength (2 Chron. 11 : 9; 2 K. 19 : 8), and had the king been accompanied by even a small body of faithful troops, he would probably have been able to maintain himself against his revolted subjects for months, or even years; but Amaziah had made himself generally unpopular and seems not to have had even a knot of adherents. When the conspirators "sent after him to Lachish" (2 K. 14 : 19), he succumbed to them without a struggle. Those who seized his person put him to death, but offered him no further indignity. On the contrary, they placed the corpse in the royal chariot in which

Amaziah had reached Lachish, and so honorably conveyed it to Jerusalem and buried it in the royal sepulchres. Amaziah had reigned altogether twenty-nine years, and had reached the fifty-fourth year of his age. G. R.

The great failing of Amaziah seems to have been a weak but restless ambition. He was always aiming to do grand, brilliant things beyond his power, and neglecting to do the simple, ordinary things within his reach, in the faithful performance of which lay his plain duty, his true usefulness, and his real honor; and the measure of success which attended his efforts in this direction led him on to new undertakings which involved him in defeat and disgrace.

The king of Israel warned him of his folly, but he would not listen. Thou hast conquered Edom. Be content. Tarry at home, and mind thine own business. Take care of thy kingdom, and the welfare of thy people. Why wilt thou meddle to thy hurt? It was good coun-

sel, but it was not heeded. The bold, bad spirit that unsanctified success had produced would not be quiet. The fire of revenge and ambition must find fuel to feed upon. This is not Amaziah, it is human nature. There is nought in it peculiar to him, we share it with him. Let a man in whom religion has not its proper ascendancy have his way, and he always grows bold, arrogant, rapacious. His desire rapidly increases. There is nothing that he will not aspire after, nothing that he will not essay to achieve. "He is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied." Alexander conquers the world, and weeps for other worlds too. Ah, there is nothing that will still conquer and satisfy the heart but God and His service. A restless, insatiable craving, that grows with success, and is hungrier the more it is fed—this is the fruit of ungodly prosperity. Is it not a destruction? Beware! surely the prosperity of fools destroys them. *Hallam.*

## Section 37.

### REIGNS OF UZZIAH (AZARIAH) AND JOTHAM.

2 CHRONICLES 26 : 1-23 ; 27 : 1-9.

**26 : 1** AND all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father  
**2** Amaziah. He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fa-  
**3** thers. Sixteen years old was Uzziah when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and  
**4** two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jechiliah of Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the  
**5** LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. And he set himself to seek  
**6** God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the vision of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him  
**7** to prosper. And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod; and he built cities in  
**8** the country of Ashdod, and among the Philistines. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that  
**9** dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Meunim. And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and

2 KINGS 15 : 1-7 ; 32-38.

**15 : 1** IN the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son  
**2** of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned two and fifty years in  
**3** Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, accord-  
**4** ing to all that his father Amaziah had done. Howbeit the high places were not taken  
**5** away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places. And the LORD  
**6** smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house. And Jotham the king's son was over  
**7** the household, judging the people of the land. Now the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are they not written in  
**8** the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers  
**9** in the city of David: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

**32** In the second year of Pekah the son of

his name spread abroad even to the entering  
 in of Egypt; for he waxed exceeding  
 9 strong. Moreover Uzziah built towers in  
 Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the val-  
 ley gate, and at the turning of the wall, and  
 10 fortified them. And he built towers in the  
 wilderness, and hewed out many cisterns,  
 for he had much cattle; in the lowland also,  
 and in the plain: and he had husbandmen  
 and vinedressers in the mountains and in the  
 fruitful fields; for he loved husbandry.  
 11 Moreover Uzziah had an army of fighting  
 men, that went out to war by bands, ac-  
 cording to the number of their reckoning  
 made by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the  
 officer, under the hand of Hananiah, one of  
 12 the king's captains. The whole number of  
 the heads of fathers' houses, even the mighty  
 men of valour, was two thousand and six  
 13 hundred. And under their hand was a  
 trained army, three hundred thousand and  
 seven thousand and five hundred, that made  
 war with mighty power, to help the king

14 against the enemy. And Uzziah prepared for them, even for all the host, shields, and spears,  
 15 and helmets, and coats of mail, and bows, and stones for slinging. And he made in Jerusa-  
 lem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the battlements, to  
 shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvel-  
 lously helped, till he was strong.

16 But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up so that he did corruptly, and he tres-  
 passed against the LORD his God; for he went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense  
 17 upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore  
 18 priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said  
 unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the  
 priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for  
 19 thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah  
 was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with  
 the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD,  
 20 beside the altar of incense. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon  
 him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from  
 21 thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him. And Uzziah  
 the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper;  
 for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's  
 22 house, judging the people of the land. Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did  
 23 Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, write. So Uzziah slept with his fathers; and they  
 buried him with his fathers in the field of burial which belonged to the kings; for they said,  
 He is a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

27: 1 Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned six-  
 2 teen years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jerushah the daughter of Zadok. And  
 he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah  
 had done: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet cor-  
 3 ruptly. He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built  
 4 much. Moreover he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and in the forests he built  
 5 castles and towers. He fought also with the king of the children of Ammon, and prevailed  
 against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of  
 silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the  
 6 children of Ammon render unto him, in the second year also, and in the third. So Jotham  
 7 became mighty, because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God. Now the rest of the

Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the  
 38 son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign. Five  
 and twenty years old was he when he began  
 to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in  
 Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Je-  
 34 rusha the daughter of Zadok. And he did  
 that which was right in the eyes of the  
 LORD: he did according to all that his fa-  
 35 ther Uzziah had done. Howbeit the high  
 places were not taken away: the people still  
 sacrificed and burned incense in the high  
 places. He built the upper gate of the house  
 36 of the LORD. Now the rest of the acts of  
 Jotham, and all that he did, are they not  
 written in the book of the chronicles of the  
 37 kings of Judah? In those days the LORD  
 began to send against Judah Rezin the king  
 of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.  
 38 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and was  
 buried with his fathers in the city of David  
 his father: and Ahaz his son reigned in his  
 stead.

acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, behold, they are written in the book of the 8 kings of Israel and Judah. He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and 9 reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David : and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

REIGN OF UZZIAH OR AZARIAH.

**Fifty-two Years, 27th of Jeroboam II. to 1st of Pekah, of Israel.**

2 CHRONICLES 26 : 1-23 ; 2 KINGS 15 : 1-7.

ON the murder of Amaziah, king of Judah, by conspirators at Lachish, *the people* are stated to have taken Azariah or Uzziah, one of Amaziah's sons, a youth of sixteen years of age, and made him king in his father's room (2 K. 14 : 21). There seems to be an indication of his having already won the popular favor, in the expression used by the writer of Chronicles (2 Chron. 26 : 1), that "*all* the people of Judah took him and made him king." Uzziah, as Ewald says, "was equally great in the arts of peace and in those of war." His reign was, as Dean Stanley remarks, "the most prosperous, excepting that of Jehoshaphat, since the time of Solomon." G. R.

Uzziah was contemporary with nearly half the reign of Jeroboam II., with Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, and Pekahiah, and the last year of his reign was the first of Pekah's. He was at first under the influence of Zechariah, a prophet "who had understanding in the visions of God." He began his reign by recovering and rebuilding Eloth (*Ælana* : *Akabah*), the old port of Solomon and Jehoshaphat, at the eastern head of the Red Sea. His successful wars restored Judah nearly to the power she had possessed under the latter king. He received tribute from Ammon, and subdued the Philistines, razing the fortifications of Gath and Ashdod, and building fortresses throughout their country. The Arabs of the southern desert, whom we have seen with the Philistines, first as tributaries and then as enemies of Judah, were reduced to the former condition. Towers were built and wells were dug, both in the maritime plain (*Shefelah*) and the Idumæan desert (*Arabah*), for the king's numerous flocks : and he had husbandmen and vine-dressers in the plains about Carmel (in the south) and in the mountains. While thus improving the resources of his country, Uzziah made preparations for its defence, whether against Israel, Syria, or Assyria. He repaired the wall of Jerusalem, which had been broken down after his father's defeat by Jehoash, building towers at the corner gate, and the valley gate, and the

angle of the wall. He armed the fortifications with newly invented military engines, the first of which we read in Jewish history, like the ballista and catapult, for shooting arrows and great stones. He kept on foot an army of 307,500 men "that made war with mighty power," under 2600 captains, "the chief of the fathers of the might men of valor," with Haniah as commander-in-chief. They went forth to war by bands, the roll of which was kept by the king's scribe, Jeiel, and the ruler of his house, Maaseiah. By the care of Uzziah, all the soldiers were armed with spears and shields, helmets and coats of mail, bows and slings. "And his name spread far abroad, for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong." But deprived probably of the counsel of Zechariah, he could not bear his prosperity. In his arrogance, he claimed the functions of the priests ; not those which we have seen always exercised by judges and kings, of offering burned sacrifices, but those which belonged exclusively to the sons of Aaron. He entered into the Holy Place to burn incense on the golden altar. He was followed by the high priest Azariah, with eighty of the most courageous of the priests, prepared to resist the profanation by force. The high priest reproved the king with all the boldness of his office, and warned him to leave the sanctuary, predicting that dishonor would befall him. What reply or deed Uzziah meditated in his rage, we are not told ; but as he stood, censer in hand, there rose with the flush of anger to his forehead the spot of leprosy, the sign of his exclusion even from the court of the house of God. When the priests saw it they thrust him out ; nay, he himself was so struck with the judgment that he hastened from the sanctuary. He remained a leper to the day of his death, secluded in a separate house, according to the directions of the law, while the government was committed to his son, Jotham. When he died he was not received into the sepulchre of the kings, but buried in a field attached to it. His life was written by the prophet Isaiah, as well as in the Chronicles of Judah. P. S.

Uzziah, in the Second Book of Kings and once in Chronicles called Azariah, ascended the throne at a time of great disorder. But from this time the kingdom of Judah attained, during the sixty-eight years which comprise the

reigns of Uzziah and his son Jotham, a degree of power such as it had not possessed since the disruption; while the sister kingdom enjoyed under Jeroboam II. but a short period of prosperity. On the south Edom was subdued, and the territory of Judah again extended to the Gulf of Akabah; in the west the Philistines were compelled to submit; on the east the Moabites and Ammonites became tributaries to Judah instead of the northern kingdom. A powerful military force was raised, the country defended by fortresses, the fortifications of Jerusalem itself were strengthened, and trade and agriculture flourished. Still, notwithstanding the general adherence of Uzziah and Jotham to the theocratic ordinances, the *moral and religious condition of the people was not satisfactory*. Luxury, pride and oppression of the poor increased together with power and riches, while heathen superstitions and other foreign customs were at the same time disseminated. See the characteristics of the times described (Isa. 2:5-8, 16 sqq.; 5:18-23). *Idolatry*, too, probably of the same kind as the image-worship at Bethel, was tolerated, if not at Jerusalem, in other parts of the land—at Beersheba (Amos 5:5; 8:14); and Lachish (Mic. 1:13)—according to the probable meaning of this passage. Hence Isaiah, in spite of the scoffers in high places (5:19 sqq.), announced in the days of Jotham the coming of the day of the Lord upon all who were proud and lofty, that they might be brought low (2:12). The judgment already in process of infliction upon the northern kingdom was to overtake Judah also (see especially 6:9-13); but here, where all was not as yet corrupt, it was to be accomplished by slower degrees. O.

**2 Chron. 26:1. Uzziah.** This form of the name is found uniformly in Chronicles, with the single exception of 1 Chron. 3:12, where Azariah occurs. Uzziah is likewise the only form used by the prophets. The writer of Kings prefers the form Azariah, but has Uzziah in four places (2 K. 15:18, 30, 32, 34). B. C.

**3.** The summary of Uzziah's reign, both in Kings and Chronicles, declares him to have been a good king—"He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done." There is, of course, the usual reservation, that under him "the high places were not removed; the people sacrificed and burned incense still on the high places" (verse 4); and the writer of Chronicles adds the qualifying statement, that he "sought God in the days of Zechariah, who

had understanding in the visions of God" (verse 5), by which it would appear that Uzziah, like Joash his grandfather, was in the earlier part of his reign faithful to Jehovah and the national religion under the influence of a Jehovistic prophet, but afterward, when this influence was removed, fell away and became irreligious. Still, no act of sin is recorded against him until nearly the close of his long life. Then, we are told, he became puffed up with pride on account of his continuous and extraordinary prosperity—"his heart was lifted up to his destruction, and he transgressed against the Lord his God." G. R.

**16. Uzziah's transgression.** A very long period of comparative fidelity had produced long prosperity, but this prosperity filled his heart with pride, and pride led him to wrongdoing. Not content with his kingly prerogative, he also aspired after the priestly dignity. The offering of incense upon the altar within the Holy of Holies was exclusively the office of the priests. This altar derived special importance from the daily burning of sweet incense upon it morning and evening, and from the sprinkling of the blood of atonement upon it by the high priest once every year. Prayer by the body of the people without accompanied the offering of the incense, and hence it came to be associated with prayer as its natural symbol. This altar had a connection with the altar of burnt offering, in the fact that its fire was taken from that. As the one altar—that of burnt offering—signified the fact of Christ's expiation, so the other, within the veil—the altar of incense—symbolized in its office the intercession of Christ. Hence there was a peculiar sacredness in the offering of incense, as representing the Saviour's own act. Therefore the priest alone, in his representative office as mediator, was privileged to perform this service; and this Uzziah well knew, yet his ambition led him to undertake so defiant a transgression against the law of his God. B.

Prolonged and uniform prosperity, especially when united with high place and the ostentation and subserviency that inevitably cling to its skirts, is a severe trial which none but a robust and hardy virtue can long endure. Uzziah's goodness gave way under it. Not content with his kingly honors, he will fain be a priest also. He is unwilling to admit that there is any important thing in his kingdom that he cannot do, any honorable function that he may not discharge. It seemed a disparagement and limitation of his supremacy. *Hallam.*

**17, 18. Faithful opposition of the priests.**

Under the leadership of Azariah, the chief priest, a band of brave priests withstood the entrance of the king and the royal guard. With remonstrance first they asserted the exclusive right of the consecrated priest to burn incense unto the Lord. And they bade him depart from the sanctuary upon whose precincts he had already trespassed; and they intimated that God would sustain His own honor against the royal trespasser.

**19.** *God's interposition of judgment upon Uzziah.* The opposition of the priests only stirred the wrath of the king. It stayed not his sacrilegious purpose. He dared to lift the censer, when suddenly God struck him with leprosy. Visibly to the priests broke forth upon his forehead the white scourge, as he stood with lifted censer. B.

**20.** It was Heaven's laws that Azariah was defying, and it was from heaven the blow came which struck his pride low. While yet he stood at God's altar, offering unhallowed incense, the leprous spot began to burn in his forehead, and in presence of the priests, whose protestations he despised, he felt himself a leper. The priests, in horror, thrust him out from the holy place. But it needed not their violence: "Yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him." How quickly God can bring the haughtiness of men low! He is a jealous God, and what touches the honor of His sanctuary and worship is of special concern to Him. We are warned against will-worship in God's service (Col. 2: 23; cf. Num. 10: 1, 2). The leprosy was but the outward token of the invisible sin of pride; yet how little shame the reality of sin occasions, as compared with that caused by an outward symbol of it like this! We may believe that in the end inward character will somehow stamp itself upon the outward appearance, and then men will see sin in its real loathsomeness. J. O.

Leprosy is a chronic, hereditary, malignant vampire, slowly eating up its victim in one long, momentary meal. It eats hair, nails, flesh, bones, exposing heart and lungs through gnawed and ghastly ribs. There is no poison that can pall this appetite, for it is virulence itself. But Jesus had compassion, put His hand on the leper, in defiance of all sanitary and civil law; and, with a word, the Lord of life changed that festering mass of corruption into the sweetness of the flesh of a little child. Measureless mercy! Marvellous power! It is as easy to make sweetness out of putrescence as lilies out of the river slime. Leprosy is God's

language to describe sin; hereditary, eating like a canker, horrible, to be quarantined against here and hereafter, unmedicable by man, instantly curable by power Divine. *H. W. Warren.*

**20-23.** *As a leper thrust forth from the Temple; thenceforth secluded for life, and in his burial.* No defence was attempted by the king or his guard against the act of expulsion by the priests. The king himself felt that which was apparent to the priests, that the hand of God had been interposed in judgment. The king was now doubly a trespasser in the holy place, for the Law excluded the leper utterly from the Temple precincts. He went forth, and to the day of his death dwelt apart, cut off not only from the house of the Lord, but severed from all association with his own household, and virtually dethroned by his own guilty act. B.—We are not told whether during his incarceration he repented of the sin that he had committed; but we may assume that he did so, since he certainly left behind him the character of a good king. G. R.

Three kings of Judah in succession begin well, serve God for a time and prosper, yet stumble and fail at last. We have seen the fates of Joash and Amaziah; and Azariah furnishes a terrible example. J. O.

**21, 23.** Cut off from access to the house of the Lord, where he had impiously sought to command, and debarred from all intercourse with men, the kingdom was administered by Jotham, his son—for how long a period before the death of Uzziah it is impossible to determine. His punishment followed him even into the grave. For, although he was "buried with his fathers," it was "in the field of the burial which belonged to the kings," probably the burying-ground of the members of the royal family; he was not laid in the sepulchre where the kings of Judah rested. A. E.

The case of Uzziah is one of the few instances recorded in the Scriptures of instant and severe punishment of the sin of irreverence and presumption. God does not always punish sin in the same way. The sin is the same, age after age. It is marvellous how human nature repeats itself, but God's treatment of the wrong is infinitely diversified. That irreverent worshippers are not all lepers is no proof that they are more pleasing to God now than when the Judean king was rebuked by that loathsome disease. *Phelps.*

As prosperity genders pride, and pride leads to the out-acting of self-will, so it goeth before

destruction. God will not be mocked. He will be had in reverence by all them that are round about Him. And none can contend against Him.

A faithful stand for truth and duty, even boldness in reproof of wrong-doing, is suggested by the attitude of these priests of God.

A just and noble life like Uzziah's, ending in evil and sorrow, strongly emphasizes the New Testament exhortations to *steadfastness* and *endurance to the end*. Hold on in the way of obedience and trust, of humility and truth, that you may be enabled to hold out to the completion of a Christian life. The whole Epistle to the Hebrews has this counsel as one of its main thoughts; and the whole Hebrew history emphatically illustrates this counsel. B.

#### REIGN OF JOTHAM.

#### Sixteen Years, 1st to 17th of Pekah, of Israel.

2 CHRONICLES 27 : 1-9 ; 2 KINGS 15 : 32-38.

Another good reign followed that of Uzziah. His son Jotham, the eleventh king of Judah, succeeded to the throne at twenty-five years of age, and reigned sixteen years. He was a wise, energetic, and devout ruler, faithful to God and mindful of the interests of his subjects. He maintained the worship of Jehovah, although idolatry was still practised to some extent among the people. He strengthened the defences of Jerusalem, and of the other walled cities of Judah. He added to the wealth and the adornment of the Temple. He reduced the Ammonites to complete subjection, and retained supremacy over the other adjacent nations. Thus true to Jehovah, the realm of Judah enjoyed peace and prosperity during the entire period of his reign. "So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord God." B.

#### *Fuller Outline of his Reign.*

Jotham, who became regent when his father, Uzziah, was stricken with leprosy, is said to have held the throne of Judah for sixteen years (2 K. 15 : 38); but it is questionable whether the space mentioned does not also include the period of his regency. He is reckoned a good prince—one who "did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah had done" (*ibid.*, verse 34), but who avoided Uzziah's sin—"howbeit he entered not into the Temple of the Lord" (2 Chron. 27 : 2). In his general policy, he simply trod in the footsteps

of his father. First of all, he further improved the defences of the country. He also "built cities"—*i.e.*, fortresses, "in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers" (*ibid.*, verses 3, 4). The Ammonite nation, subdued by his father (2 Chron. 26 : 8), rebelled against him, and refused to pay him tribute, whereupon Jotham invaded their country, defeated the Ammonite monarch, reimposed the tribute, and increased it for the first three years, as a punishment. Toward the close of his reign he had to sustain attacks on the part of Pekah and Rezin, who had already formed their alliance; but these attacks do not seem to have become formidable until the reign of his son (2 K. 15 : 37 ; 16 : 5). The internal condition of Judah did not improve under Jotham. Notwithstanding his own faithfulness to the Jehovistic worship, "the people did yet corruptly" (2 Chron. 27 : 2). The high-place worship, as a matter of course, still continued (2 K. 15 : 35); and with it were joined a number of base and degrading foreign superstitions. The opening chapters of Isaiah depict the Judea of Jotham's time. "The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint" (Isa. 1 : 5). The rulers were no better than "the rulers of Sodom;" the people were like the "people of Gomorrah" (verse 9). A "form of godliness, without the power," prevailed. Sacrifices were offered; incense was burned; new moons and Sabbaths were carefully observed; the appointed feasts were kept; assemblies were called; solemn meetings were held; hands were spread forth; "many prayers" were even put up (verses 11-15). But all this was a mere show of religion, worthless—nay, abominable—in the sight of God. G. R.

**Chap. 27.** This short chapter runs parallel with 2 K. 15 : 32-38, and is taken mainly from the same source or sources. It is ampler than the narrative in Kings, containing all the facts of that narrative except the notice of the Syrian war (verse 37), and adding besides a much fuller account of Jotham's buildings (verses 3 and 4), and the entire account of the Ammonite war (verse 5). The writer inserts also, after his manner, certain religious reflections—as that Jotham, warned by his father's fate, did not attempt to enter the Temple (verse 2); and that he became mighty *because* he established his way before the Lord his God (verse 6).

**2. He did right according to all that his father Uzziah did.** Uzziah's single act of impiety is not regarded as destroying the generally good character of his reign. "Howbeit he entered not into the Temple of



the Lord"—*i. e.*, he imitated his father in all respects, excepting in his impious usurpation of the priestly functions. B. C.

**6. Because he prepared his ways before the Lord.** Because he directed his counsels and actions according to the rule of God's word. It has been observed that Jotham is the only one of the kings of Judah who has not some evil laid to his charge. David, Solomon, Rehoboam, Abijah, Jehoshaphat, all committed some trespass of greater or less magnitude; but of Jotham no fault or error is recorded. *Bp. Patrick.*—This text takes us behind the scenes, and admits us into those privacies of the king's mind and habit where the real clues of every one's character are to be found. We arrive at the secret of all strength, "*preparation,*" and that preparation made "before the Lord his God." When a man prepares his ways before the Lord his God, the consequence is sure: he will grow mighty. He will do what he does strongly. And both his work and his own soul are sure to grow. This is just what we all want; we ought never to rest till we reach it—to be mighty in prayer, mighty in influence, mighty in good works, mighty in grace. *J. Vaughan.*

**2 K. 15 : 37. In those days the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin the King of Syria.** Rezin's name occurs in the Assyrian inscriptions early in the reign of Tiglath-pileser, probably in the year B. C. 743. At that time he pays to the Assyrians a heavy tribute, consisting of eighteen talents of gold, three hundred talents of silver, two hundred talents of copper, and twenty talents of spices. Subsequently, about the year B. C. 734, he is found in revolt. His alliance with Pekah, here implied, is directly stated by Isaiah (7 : 2). Begun in Jotham's reign, it continued, and came to a head, in the reign of Ahaz. *Ham-*

*mond.*—The alliance between Pekah and Rezin was made in the reign of Jotham. It had for its object in all probability the consolidation of a power in Syria which might be strong enough to resist the further progress of the Assyrian arms. The recent invasions of Tiglath-pileser had effectually alarmed the two northern monarchs, and had induced them to put aside the traditional jealousies which naturally kept them apart, and to make a league offensive and defensive. Into this league they were anxious that Judea should enter; but they distrusted the house of David, which had been so long hostile both to Damascus and to Samaria. They consequently formed the design of transferring the Jewish crown to a certain Ben-Tabeal (Isa. 7 : 6), probably a Jewish noble, perhaps a refugee at one of their courts, whom they could trust to join heartily in their schemes. Hostilities apparently broke out before the death of Jotham; but nothing of importance was effected until the first year of his successor. B. C.

Holy Scripture simply informs us that "in those days Jehovah began to send against Judah Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah." It is a majestic and truly prophetic mode of viewing events, thus to recognize in such a league as that of Rezin and Pekah the divinely appointed judgment upon Judah. It is to pass from the secondary and visible causes of an event straight to Him who overrules all, and who with Divine skill weaves the threads that man has spun into the web and woof of His dealings. In point of fact, the Syro-Israelitish league against Judah ultimately embraced not only the Ammonites, who refused to continue their tribute, but also the Edomites, the Philistines, and all the southern tribes lately reduced to subjection (2 Chron. 28 : 17, 18). A. E.

## Section 38.

REIGN OF AHAZ, SIXTEEN YEARS.

**17th of Pekah to 3d of Hosea, of Israel.**

2 CHRONICLES 28 : 1-27.

1 AHAZ was twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and he did not that which

2 KINGS 16 : 1-20.

1 In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. Twenty years old

2 was right in the eyes of the LORD, like David his father : but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten  
 3 images for the Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria ; and they smote him, and carried away of his a great multitude of captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a  
 6 great slaughter. For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, all of them valiant men ; because they had forsaken the LORD,  
 7 the God of their fathers. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the ruler of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the  
 8 king. And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and  
 9 brought the spoil to Samaria. But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded : and he went out to meet the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD, the God of your fathers, was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage which hath reached up  
 10 unto heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you : *but* are there not even with you trespasses of your own against the LORD your God?  
 11 Now hear me therefore, and send back the captives, which ye have taken captive of your brethren : for the fierce wrath of the  
 12 LORD is upon you. Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the  
 13 war, and said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither : for ye purpose that which will bring upon us a trespass against the LORD, to add unto our sins and to our trespass : for our trespass is great, and there  
 14 is fierce wrath against Israel. So the armed

was Ahaz when he began to reign ; and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem : and he did not that which was right in the eyes of the LORD his God, like David his father.  
 3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every  
 5 green tree. Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war : and they besieged  
 6 Ahaz, but could not overcome him. At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath : and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there,  
 7 unto this day. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son : come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present  
 9 to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him : and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried *the people of* it captive to  
 10 Kir, and slew Rezin. And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw the altar that was at Damascus : and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship  
 11 thereof. And Urijah the priest built an altar : according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus, so did Urijah the priest make it against king Ahaz came from Da-  
 12 mascus. And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar : and the king drew near unto the altar, and  
 13 offered thereon. And he burnt his burnt offering and his meal offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood  
 14 of his peace offerings upon the altar. And the brasen altar, which was before the LORD, he brought from the forefront of the house, from between his altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of  
 15 his altar. And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering, and the evening meal offering, and the king's burnt offering, and his meal offering, with the

men left the captives and the spoil before  
15 the princes and all the congregation. And  
the men which have been expressed by  
name rose up, and took the captives, and  
with the spoil clothed all that were naked  
among them, and arrayed them, and shod  
them, and gave them to eat and to drink,  
and anointed them, and carried all the feeble  
of them upon asses, and brought them to  
Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto their  
brethren : then they returned to Samaria.

16 At that time did king Ahaz send unto the  
17 kings of Assyria to help him. For again  
the Edomites had come and smitten Judah,  
18 and carried away captives. The Philistines  
also had invaded the cities of the lowland,  
and of the South of Judah, and had taken  
Beth-shemesh, and Aijalon, and Gederoth,  
and Soco with the towns thereof, and Tim-  
nah with the towns thereof, Gimzo also and  
the towns thereof : and they dwelt there.

19 For the LORD brought Judah low because  
of Ahaz king of Israel ; for he had dealt

20 wantonly in Judah, and trespassed sore against the LORD. And Tilgath-pilneser king of  
21 Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not. For Ahaz took away  
a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king and of the princes,  
22 and gave it unto the king of Assyria : but it helped him not. And in the time of his distress  
23 did he trespass yet more against the LORD, this same king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the  
gods of Damascus, which smote him : and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria  
helped them, *therefore* will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin  
24 of him, and of all Israel. And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and  
cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD ;  
25 and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Judah  
he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD, the  
26 God of his fathers. Now the rest of his acts, and all his ways, first and last, behold, they are  
27 written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and  
they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem ; for they brought him not into the sepulchres  
of the kings of Israel : and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

AHAZ, who succeeded his father, Jotham, upon the throne of Judah at the age of twenty, had neither courage, nor patriotism, nor energy, nor prudence, nor piety, nor even a decent regard for the traditions of his house and nation. He found the nation far advanced in corruption—the nobles, and even the members of his own family, attached generally to the heathenizing party—his kingdom menaced by a combination of two powerful states, which threatened its destruction, or at least his own deposition (Isa. 7 : 6)—and his only hope of efficient support the interposition and protection of some powerful heathen sovereign. His two deadly enemies, Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria, who had commenced the war in the lifetime of his father (2 K. 15 : 37), came up together against Jerusalem, and laid siege to it

burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their meal offering, and their drink offerings ; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice : but the brasen altar shall be  
16 for me to inquire by. Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz com-  
17 manded. And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them ; and took down the sea from off the brasen oxen that were under it, and  
18 put it upon a pavement of stone. And the covered way for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he unto the house of the  
19 LORD, because of the king of Assyria. Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the book of the  
20 chronicles of the kings of Judah? And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David : and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

(2 K. 16 : 5 ; Isa. 7 : 1). A horrible fear fell upon both king and people—" the heart of Ahaz was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind" (Isa. 7 : 2). Nevertheless, encouraged by Isaiah, who scoffed at his assailants and bid him feel no dread of such mere " tails of smoking firebrands" (*ibid.*, verse 4), Ahaz resisted, and after a while forced his antagonists to raise the siege, and attempt the subjugation of Judea by a different method. Rezin drew off his troops, and proceeding southward fell upon the southern Judean territory, overran the whole of it, and pushed his conquests to the shore of the Red Sea, where he " drave the Jews from Elath" (2 K. 16 : 6), and restored to the Idumeans the city and adjacent territory. Pekah also gave up the siege, and set to work to rav-

age the territory, where he slew, we are told (2 Chron. 28 : 6), a hundred and twenty thousand men, and took two hundred thousand women and children prisoners (verses 7, 8). In this deep affliction of the Jewish nation her old foes, moreover, rose up against her. The Edomites on the southeast and the Philistines on the southwest poured in their troops upon the devoted land, and added to its calamities. Edom was content, apparently, with a single desolating raid, in which numerous captives were carried off (verse 17); but the Philistines were bolder in their aggression and more bitter in their hostility. They "invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and took Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof; and they dwelt there" (verse 18). Judah was indeed "brought low, and made naked." Her "country was desolate, her cities burned with fire: her land, strangers devoured it in her presence; it was desolate, as overthrown by strangers" (Isa. 1 : 7). The territory that remained to her was truly but "a very small remnant" (*ibid.*, verse 9), and even this was threatened. Pekah and Rezin might be expected at any moment to resume their attacks. It is not surprising that under these circumstances Ahaz thought himself entitled to call in foreign aid, and judged that the power from which he was most likely to obtain effectual aid was Assyria. This great empire had reached well-nigh the zenith of her power; and just at this time it was her special desire to extend her influence toward the southwest, and round off her dominion in that quarter, by absorbing into it the Palestinian region. Ahaz, therefore, having collected all the treasure on which he could lay his hand, sent a humble embassy with the rich gift to the court of Tiglath-pileser (2 K. 16 : 7; 2 Chron. 28 : 16). Tiglath-pileser responded at once to this appeal by a sudden march against Damascus and subsequent capture of the city. Rezin lost his life and Damascus its separate existence. Then the conqueror advanced against Samaria, and finding a party friendly to him within the walls, who undertook to remove Pekah, negotiated with them, and appointed their chief, Hoshea, to be tributary king of Israel. Ahaz was thus effectually relieved from the enemies whose attack he had feared; but to obtain this relief he had been forced to sacrifice the independence of his country. As Ewald says—"The price paid for the Assyrian aid was much more than the treasures of the Temple

and of his palace; it was the independence and honor of the realm itself." Ahaz became, by his compact with Tiglath-pileser, a mere subject—almost a mere nominal—king; his position was no better than that of Hoshea. Subjection to Assyria involved not only the continual payment of tribute year by year and the occasional sending to the monarch of rich presents besides, but appearance before him to do him homage whenever he was in the neighborhood. Ahaz, we are told, humbly paid his court to Tiglath-pileser at Damascus, before that monarch returned to Ninevah. This is probably the occasion of which Tiglath-pileser has left an account, when he says that tribute was brought him by twenty-two kings, among whom we find those of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Askelon, Gaza, and also "Jehoahaz of Judah." True religion was almost wholly extinguished under this wicked king. In vain did Isaiah warn him, rebuke him, offer him signs, threaten him, urge him to rely on Jehovah (Isa. 7 : 4-17; 8 : 1-4); he doggedly pursued his own course, sought help in every quarter but the right one, put his trust in arms of flesh, or in the gods of the nations—Assyrian, Syrian (2 Chron. 28 : 23), Phœnician (*ibid.*, verse 2), Ammonite (2 K. 16 : 8)—cared not how he degraded his country or disgraced his noble lineage, persisted in evil, ever trespassed more and more (2 Chron. 28 : 22), till, at the age of thirty-six (2 K. 16 : 2), when he was in the very prime of life, God cut him off, called him to his account, and so stopped the further degradation of His people. Ahaz seems to have died in the same year with his patron, Tiglath-pileser, B.C. 727. He was buried, like his fathers, in the city of David (*ibid.*, verse 20); but, according to the writer of Chronicles (2 Chron. 28 : 27), "not in the sepulchres of the kings." G. R.

He made himself notorious for his wickedness, surpassing in crime and downright depravity all the kings of Judah; he was surpassed in sin by few if any of the most wicked kings of Israel. H. C.—From the very first he gave himself to idolatry of all kinds. He even consecrated his children by baptism of fire to Molech, the hideous god of Moab. In the valley of Hinnom, in a spot known by the name of Tophet, the brazen statue of Molech was erected, with the furnace within, into which the children were thrown. To this dreadful form of human sacrifice, Ahaz gave the highest sanction by the devotion of one or more of his sons. He removed the great brazen altar of burnt offerings from the court of the Temple, and set it up elsewhere, as an adjunct

of a heathen altar. He despoiled the Temple of some of its finest ornaments. He took its treasures and cut in pieces and melted all its vessels of precious metal; and finally closed its doors and caused its worship to cease. *Todd.*—The moral darkness became thicker than ever during the sixteen years of his reign. Open apostasy was now the order of the day. Images of Baal, altars and high places consecrated to idolatry did not suffice King Ahaz: he crowned his abominable practices by burning his children in the valley of Hinnom. The visitation of Divine wrath upon guilt so flagrant was swift and terrible. Against the remonstrances of Isaiah, he applied for help to the king of Assyria; and in answer to his request, Tiglath-pileser attacked and destroyed Damascus. King Ahaz went to that ancient capital to meet him; but when the king of Assyria came to him "he distressed him, and helped him not." The influence of this king seems to have been most pernicious. Calamity only served to blind his eyes and harden his heart. The thickening afflictions of the sister kingdom had no effect on him; and had his reign not been cut short by his early death at the age of thirty-six, a similar catastrophe could hardly have been averted from Judah. W. G. B.

**2 K. 16: 1.** As throughout this history, it is emphatically indicated that just as former successes had come from the help of the Lord, so now the real cause of Judah's reverses lay in their apostasy from God. From the first, and throughout, Ahaz "did not the right in the sight of the Lord." Nor should we omit to mark how the sacred text when describing each successive reign in Judah brings its religious character in comparison with that of David, which should have been the type for that of all his successors, even as Jeroboam's became that for the kings of Israel. A. E.

**2. Ahaz did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord.** Ahaz's apostasy seems to have commenced with the very first year of his reign. He was the worst of all the kings of Judah. We need not suppose that all the idolatrous practices enumerated in verses 3 and 4 preceded the invasion of his territory by Rezin and Pekah (verse 5); but it is plain from 2 Chron., verse 5, that some were anterior to it.

**3. He walked in the way of the kings of Israel.** The meaning is not that he set up calves, which we can scarcely suppose him to have done; but, as the writer of Chronicles explains, "he made molten images for Baalim." He imitated—*i. e.*, the worst of the

Israelite kings—Ahab and Ahaziah—by a re-introduction of the Baal-worship, which had been rooted out of Israel by Jehu, and of Judah by Jehoiada. B. C.—He began with the high places; thence he descends to the calves of Dan and Bethel; from thence he falls to a Syrian altar—to the Syrian god; then, from a partnership, he falls to an utter exclusion of the true God, and blocking up His Temple; and then to the sacrifice of his own son; and at last, as if hell were broken loose upon God's inheritance, every several city, every high place of Judah hath a new god. *Bp. H.*

In the opening chapters of Isaiah we have an account of the condition of the kingdom of Judah at the time that Ahaz succeeded to the throne. The prosperity which the country had enjoyed under Uzziah had been continued and increased under the righteous reign of his son Jotham. And now the grandson, Ahaz, a young man of twenty, finds the country abounding in wealth, full of silver and gold. Isaiah says there was no end of their treasure; their land also was full of horses, neither was there any end of their chariots. Their commerce, too, was in a thriving condition. But before Ahaz died, all this was changed. Enemy after enemy invaded his country. The land became desolate. The king was reduced to great extremities to obtain money. Instead of the sunshine of prosperity, there was on every side the dark shadow of desolation and decay. We have the explanation of it all in the third and fourth verses. Ahaz began badly, and every fresh movement in his life was a step from bad to worse. His history is a further illustration of how one sin leads to another. It was a continuously downward path. C. H. I.

The fact which seems to be certain is, that Ahaz adopted the Moloch worship of the Ammonites and Moabites, and sacrificed at least one son, probably his first-born, according to the horrid rites of those nations. A king of Moab had once done the same when he found himself in a sore strait (2 K. 3: 27). Another had expressed his willingness so to appease his god (Mic. 6: 7). Hitherto, apparently, the Jews had been guiltless of the abomination. They had been warned against it by Moses (Lev. 18: 21; De. 18: 10). Now, however, as the time of more searching trial approached, as dangers thickened, and the national existence was seen to be in peril, the awful rite seems to have exercised a fatal fascination upon them. Unnoticed among the national sins by the earlier prophets, it comes in Jeremiah and Ezekiel to be one of the offences most frequently protested

against. Another king besides Ahaz sacrifices the heir-apparent to the throne (2 K. 21 : 6). The people follow the example with fatal eagerness, and the Hinnom valley swims with the blood of human victims. The cruel custom is practised in both kingdoms (2 K. 17 : 17).

**5. Then Rezin and Pekah came up.** Rezin and Pekah had begun their attacks upon Judea in the reign of Jotham. The earlier scenes of the war, omitted by the writer of Kings, are given at some length in Chronicles (28 : 5-15). The confederates, it appears, acted separately. Rezin in one quarter, Pekah in another, invaded the kingdom. A great battle was fought with each. In both engagements the Jews were defeated, and lost numerous prisoners. In the battle with Pekah the slain numbered (if the text be correct) one hundred and twenty thousand. The country was then ravaged by Pekah, and women and children to the number of two hundred thousand were carried off. These, however, were, by the advice of the prophet Oded, restored. Siege was then laid to Jerusalem by the allies in common, as related in the present passage (cf. Isa. 7 : 1); but the siege was unsuccessful, the defences raised by Uzziah (2 Chron. 26 : 9) and Jotham (*ibid.*, 27 : 3) proving too strong for the besiegers, who, probably at the close of the military season, retired. B. C.

It was the purpose of Pekah and Rezin to depose the house of David and place on the throne of Judah a person of low origin (Isa. 7 : 6). Not only would their plan not "come to pass" (Isa. 7 : 7), but looking beyond the unbelief and the provocations of an Ahaz (Isa. 7 : 13), the Divine promise would stand fast. "The house of David" could not fail. For beyond the present was the final goal of promised salvation in Immanuel the Virgin-born (verse 14). And this was God's answer to the challenge of Rezin and of the son of Remaliah—His "sign" as against their plans : a majestic declaration also of His object in maintaining "the house of David," even when represented by an Ahaz. And when the hour of judgment came, it would be not by placing a Syrian king on the throne of David, but by carrying prince and people into a banishment which would open a new—the last—period of Israel's God-destined history. A. E.—Their attack upon Jerusalem itself was unsuccessful, chiefly in consequence of the spirit infused into the people by Isaiah. To this epoch belongs the celebrated prophecy in which the birth of the child Immanuel, whose very name expressed the devout confidence, "*God is with us*," was a sign

of the speedy overthrow of both the hostile kings by Assyria. A second sign was given by the birth of a child who received the significant name of Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "Make speed to the spoil ! hasten to the prey !" And in that exalted style of pregnant meaning, which has given Isaiah the name of "the evangelic prophet," these passing wars are dignified by the most glowing prophecies of the Messiah's kingdom. P. S.

While the fate of Judah was trembling in the balance, the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to go with his son, Shear Yashub, to meet the king "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, at the highway of the fuller's field" (Isa. 7 : 8). From the manner in which the locality is mentioned, we infer that the king was wont to pass that way, possibly on an inspection of the northwestern fortifications. The prophet's commission to Ahaz was threefold. He was to admonish him to courage (Isa. 7 : 4), and to announce that, so far from the purpose of the allies succeeding, Ephraim itself should, within a given time, cease to be "a people." Lastly, he was to give "a sign" of what had been said, especially of the continuance of the house of David. This was, in contrast to the king's unbelief, to point from the present to the future, and to indicate the ultimate object in view—the birth of the Virgin's Son, whose name, Immanuel, symbolized all of present promise and future salvation connected with the house of David. The result was what might have been expected from the character of Ahaz. As with ill-disguised irony he rejected the "sign," implying that his trust was in the help of Assyria, not in the promise of God, so he persevered in his course, despite the prophet's warning. Yet it scarcely required a prophet's vision to foretell the issue, although only a prophet could so authoritatively, and in such terms, have announced it (Isa. 7 : 17-8). A. E.

**2 Chron. 28 : 17, 18.** The retreat of Pekah and Rezin gave Ahaz no permanent relief. In the words of Isaiah, God had raised up against him the Syrians in front (the East), and the Philistines behind (the West). They overran the whole maritime plain (*Shefelah*) and the highlands that border it, taking Bethshemesh, Ajalon, and other cities. The Edomites, set free by the Syrians, invaded Judah and carried off many captives, while the Syrians and Israelites threatened to return. Ahaz now applied for help to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, against Syria and Israel. P. S.

**2 K. 16 : 9.** Rezin was slain and Damascus destroyed. Damascus now disappears from

the Old Testament history ; but by the fourth century B.C. it had been rebuilt, and has maintained its prosperity down to the present day. It is situated in a fertile plain watered by the river Barada, which is probably the Abana of Scripture, to the east of the great mountain chain of the Anti-Libanus, on the edge of the desert. Travellers describe it as "embosomed in a wide forest of fruit trees, intersected and surrounded by sparkling streams, in the midst of an earthly paradise." This natural beauty and fertility, combined with its importance as a centre of trade, have secured the permanence of its prosperity for nearly four thousand years. A. F. K.

With the capture of Damascus, the Damascus-Syrian empire, which had hitherto been a scourge for the punishment of Israel, came to an end. Henceforth it was only a province of Assyria. It is in the light of all these events that we have to read such prophecies as those in Isa. 7 and the first part of chapter 8. The majestic Divine calm of these utterances, their lofty defiance of man's seeming power, their grand certitude, and the withering irony with which what seemed the irresistible might of these two "smoking firebrands" is treated—all find their illustration in the history of this war. Such prophecies warrant us in climbing the heights of faith, from which Isaiah bids us look, to where, in the dim distance, the morning glow of the new Messianic day is seen to fill the sky with glory. But in Damascus the conquered did Tiglath-pileser gather, as for an Eastern *darbar*, the vanquished and subject princes. Thither also did King Ahaz go "to meet" the king of Assyria ; and thence, as the outcome of what he had learned from prophecy and seen as its fulfilment in history, did this king of Judah send the pattern of the heathen altar to Jerusalem (2 K. 16 : 10, 11). A. E.

**10-18. The altar at Damascus** (verse 10). He sent its pattern to Jerusalem, where Urijah the high-priest prepared an altar of the same form against the king's return from Damascus, when, with a profanity on which Athaliah even had not ventured, Ahaz put it in the place of the brazen altar, and commanded Urijah to offer on it all the burnt offerings and other sacrifices. Superstition led him, however, to preserve the brazen altar for oracular uses, and he placed it on the north of his great altar. The great brass sea of Solomon was dismounted from its supporting oxen, and the lavers from their bases, which were sent to the king of Assyria, together with the coverings which had been built for the king's entry to the house and

for the shelter of the worshippers on the Sabbath. The golden vessels of the house of God were cut in pieces and sent with the rest, and the sanctuary itself was shut up ; while idol altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem, and high places in every city of Judah. It was not for want of provocation to Jehovah that Judah did not at once share the captivity of Israel ; but for the sake of "the sure mercies of David" another respite was given, and a new era of godliness throws its light over the reign of Hezekiah, amid all the pressure of invasion and the threats of approaching captivity. P. S.

By the side of the notice, that Ahaz "broke up the vessels of the house of God," we find it stated that he "shut up the doors of the house of Jehovah." This implies that the services within the Holy Place were now wholly discontinued. Thus the worship would be confined to the sacrificial services at the new altar ; while the transference into the Temple porch of the king's stand and of the entry to it would not only bring them close to the new altar, but also assign to them a more prominent and elevated position than that previously occupied. After this we do not wonder to read that Ahaz "made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem," nor yet that "in every several city of Judah he made high places [*bamoth*] to burn incense unto other gods." What influence all this must have had on a people already given to idolatry will readily be perceived. Indeed, Holy Scripture only gives us a general indication of the baneful changes made in the public religious institutions of the country. To close the doors of the Holy and Most Holy Places was to abolish what set forth Israel's fellowship with their Lord, His gracious acceptance of them, and His communication of pardon, light, and life. The temple of Ahaz was no longer that of Jehovah, and the attempt to attach the old services to the new altar would only aggravate the sin, while it exhibited the folly of the king. Even more strange seems the mixture of heathen rites which it was sought to introduce by the side of the perverted Temple ritual. It consisted of the worship of the Syrian deities, of Baalim, of Ashtoreth, of the host of heaven, and of Molech—in short, it combined Syrian, Phœnician, and Assyrian idolatry. Yet in all this Ahaz found a servile instrument in the high-priest Urijah (2 K. 16 : 11-16). Assuredly the prophet's description of Israel's "watchmen" as "ignorant," "dumb dogs . . . loving to slumber," "greedy dogs," "insatiable shepherds," only bent on gain and

steeped in vice, was true to the letter (Isa. 56: 10-12). And with this corresponds the same prophet's account of the moral and religious condition of the people (Isa. 2: 6-9; 5: 7-23). In view of this, King Ahaz can only be regarded as the outcome of his time and the representative of his people. Accordingly the judgments announced in these prophecies of Isaiah read only as the logical sequence of the state of matters. The account of these judgments comes to us equally from the Books of Kings and Chronicles, which here supplement one another, and especially from the prophecies of Isaiah, which in chapter 7 give the most vivid description of the condition of things. A. E.

**19.** *Reason of the calamities brought upon Judah.* The record is ever the same. It is the Lord that brings Judah low. It is the sin of Ahaz, the king, that brings upon the nation the judgment of Jehovah. The one great truth standing out upon every page of this inspired history, is this, that the nation is dealt with according to its treatment of Him. Neglect of His worship and commandments is invariably attended with sore calamities upon the king and people.

**20, 21.** *The result of the appeal of Ahaz to the king of Assyria.* Beside the offer to make his kingdom tributary to the king of Assyria, Ahaz sent that monarch large amounts from the stores of the Temple and the national treasury. Tiglath-pileser came with a large army, conquered Syria (one of the foes of Judah), overcame Pekah, the king of Israel, and depopulated the eastern tribes of Israel. He also conquered the Philistines and took their capital. Although Ahaz was thus relieved from the oppression of these hostile kingdoms, the record declares that the king of Assyria neither strengthened nor helped him, but made his condition the more trying. "His interposition did not replace Ahaz in an independent or safe position; it merely substituted an actual for a threatened subjection. It straitened Ahaz's resources by depriving him of all his accumulated treasure, and left him subject to a heavy annual impost." Thus by his rejection of God, and his defiant impiety, the great dominion inherited by Ahaz from Uzziah and Jotham was broken up, large numbers of the people of Judah were enslaved, the treasures of the Temple and the capital were wasted, and Ahaz himself made a subject of the king of Assyria. B.

**23.** *They were the ruin of him and of all Israel.* He was not content with the paganism which he found already in the kingdom. He imported new shapes of idol wor-

ship. For when "King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus, King Ahaz sent to Urijah, the priest, the fashion of the altar and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof." . . . Thus "he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him." "*They were the ruin of him,*" says the historian, "*and of all Israel.*" Meanwhile, the true God and His Temple and worship he treated with scorn. *Hallam.*

**26, 27.** *The burial of Ahaz.* Though his remains were brought into the city, they were not buried in the sepulchres of the kings. This was an expression of judgment upon the character of the dead king. His great and manifold iniquities prevented his interment in the royal burial-place. B.—His subjects complain that he died so late; and, as repenting that he ever was, deny him a room in the sepulchres of kings; as if they said, "The common earth of Jerusalem is too good for him that degenerated from his progenitors, marred his kingdom, deprived his people, forsook his God." *Bp. H.*

In the foolish persistence of Ahaz in extreme impiety, we learn that true relief from trouble or distress is found nowhere but in God; and only from disobedience to God come trouble and suffering that can find no alleviation. And we have in this king an illustration and emphatic confirmation of the utterance of Solomon, *The way of the transgressor is hard.* B.—This the legitimate ending of a long career of alternate chastisement and sin without repentance. A Cornish proverb says, "He that will not be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rock." This is the rock on which haughty and defiant guilt is wrecked. It is simply left to itself, to become what it has chosen to be—such a demon of iniquity as to be abhorred of God and man. God save us from ourselves! We carry within us the elements of hell if we but choose to make them such. Ahaz, Judas, Nero, Borgia, Alva—all were once prattling infants in happy mothers' arms. The first babe of our race—a marvel of joy to the first mother—was the first murderer. Who shall dare to encounter the possibilities of human guilt without the grace of God?

King Ahaz is one of the stupendous monuments of guilt in Israelitish history. He is one of the few men in any history of whom not one good thing is recorded. His career was one uniform and unmitigated stream of iniquity from beginning to end. Not one virtue or virtuous act is thought worthy of mention in



his whole life. So black and disgraceful was his reign, that when he died, the indignant and revolted conscience of the nation refused him burial in the royal sepulchre. His career illustrates *that law of character by which the wickedness of a man is proportioned to the amount of holy influence which he has conquered.* We find a reason for his extreme depravity in the extreme facilities which he had for being a saint. He was the son of a godly father. His youth was passed under the restraints of holy example. He was one in a royal line which had been distinguished for examples of illustrious piety. He knew that he alone, of all the monarchs of the world, held his crown and kingdom by Divine right as king of God's chosen people. He knew that a splendid history lay behind him, and that a more splendid future was before him. In the line of regal descent, in which he was a connecting link, One was to appear in whom all the nations of the world were to be blessed. That ancient promise of God to Abraham spanned like a rainbow the royal family of Judah. Mysterious as its meaning was, it must have been a power of moral restraint and moral stimulus to a man called of God to sit on the throne of Judah. Such a combination of holy influence this Judean king broke through ; and *therefore* he became the man he was.

The career of this apostate prince illustrates also *the faithfulness of God in chastising wicked men for their good.* "The Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz." From the beginning to the end of his reign, he experienced the truth that the way of transgressors is hard. In war he was whipped all around. In alliances he was cheated and checkmated. His people were made captives by thousands. Nothing went well with him. His public life was one long career of defying God, yet of God's persistent efforts to save him by chastising him. This is repeated over and over again in the experience of wicked men. Such men often think it a great mystery that they suffer so much. They do not understand why it is that misfortune pursues them so. "Just my luck," says one, when ill-success attends his business. Yet often the secret reason is that God is trying to save the man. He is contending with God in one way, and God is contending with him in another. There is no luck about it. It is God's faithfulness to the soul. The sufferings of this world are not in the strict sense retributive. They are disciplinary. The world of retribution lies farther on. In *love* God holds the rod over many a bad man. He strikes him here, and He strikes him there. God's flail threshes him like

wheat. He surrounds him with trouble. He heaps up misfortunes. This is His way of striving to save men from eternal death. Sometimes He pursues it to the very last, till the grave closes over the incorrigible sinner, and he passes on to a world where the retributive decisions of eternity displace the benign discipline of time.

The life of this depraved prince illustrates further *the extreme which sin reaches when men fight successfully against God's chastisements.* "In the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord." This is the fearful phenomenon sometimes witnessed in the developments of sin in this world. Some men are not subdued by suffering. They refuse to bow to chastisement. The more they suffer, the more they sin. Trouble angers them against God.

The reign of this wicked monarch illustrates *the disappointments which wicked men experience in their hopes of happiness in sin.* The historian relates of him : "He said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But *they were the ruin of him.*" True to the life, every word of it ! In no more truthful figure can we express the experience of many young men who enter on a career of worldliness. They see other men living for this world alone, as it seems to a looker-on, on the top of the wave of human felicity. A rich man seems to them a supremely happy man. A successful statesman appears to have all that an aspiring man can ask for. A man who has gained the summit of social rank and splendor becomes, to many who are below him, the model of earthly bliss. Any man at the top of the ladder seems very high up to a man at the bottom. So a young man is apt to look on the world to which he proposes to devote his being. "The world makes these men happy," he says ; "and I will try it, that it may make me happy too." This is the secret experience, probably, of all who give themselves deliberately to a life of irreligion. They are allured by the glamour of irreligious prosperity. But when they try the experiment for themselves, "it is the ruin of them." The fruit turns to ashes. No such young man ever finds the world to be what it looked to be when he surveyed it from afar. It is a beautiful mirage. The testimony of experience is proverbial, that the richest men are not the happiest men. The most successful ambitious men are not the happiest men. The seekers of pleasure who find the most are not the happiest men. One word expresses the is-

sue of all such experiments—disappointment. This world is full of soured and disappointed men. The more irreligious men are, the more profoundly they experience this inward consciousness of *failure* in their life's plans. They have "hewed out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water."

In one of Hawthorne's thrillingly fearful fictions, he represents a wretched man going about with a serpent in his bosom. Every now and then he clutches at his breast with his fingers, crying, "It gnaws me; it gnaws me!" As he walks the streets among his kind, he thinks he finds that every man he meets is cursed with

the same snaky guest in his bosom. Each man at intervals seems to thrust his hand up to throttle the reptile. All alike are doomed to the hideous companionship. "It gnaws me; it gnaws me!" is the universal confession. The whole world seems to his crazed fancy to be at the mercy of vipers, each man warming and cherishing his own. Such a world is *any* world of beings given over to seeking happiness in itself. Such is this world, except as its fearful consciousness is relieved by the grace of God. Such is *self* in any man or woman, when turned away from God and turned *inward*. *Phelps*.

## Section 39.

REIGN OF HEZEKIAH, TWENTY-NINE YEARS (*Begun*).

From 3d of Hoshea, of Israel.

HEZEKIAH'S RELIGIOUS REFORMATION.

2 CHRONICLES, CHAPS. 29, 30 and 31.

29 : 1 HEZEKIAH began to reign when he was five and twenty years old; and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Abijah the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them. 4 And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the broad place on the east, and said unto them, 5 Hear me, ye Levites; now sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry forth the 6 filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the sight of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the 7 LORD, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy 8 place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to be tossed to and fro, to be an astonishment, 9 and an hissing, as ye see with your eyes. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and 10 our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, that his fierce anger may turn away 11 from us. My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to minister unto him, and that ye should be his ministers, and burn incense. 12 Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the

2 KINGS 18 : 1-8.

1 Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, according 4 to all that David his father had done. He removed the high places, and brake the pillars, and cut down the Asherah: and he brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it; and he called 5 it Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor 6 among them that were before him. For he clave to the LORD, he departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, 7 which the LORD commanded Moses. And the LORD was with him; whithersoever he went forth he prospered: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him 8 not. He smote the Philistines unto Gaza and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

son of Jehallelel : and of the Gershonites, Joah the son of Zimma, and Eden the son of Joah :  
 13 and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel : and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and  
 14 Mattaniah : and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei : and of the sons of Jeduthun,  
 15 Shemaiah and Uzziel. And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and  
 went in, according to the commandment of the king by the words of the LORD, to cleanse  
 16 the house of the LORD. And the priests went in unto the inner part of the house of the LORD,  
 to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD  
 into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad to  
 17 the brook Kidron. Now they began on the first *day* of the first month to sanctify, and on  
 the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD ; and they sanctified the  
 house of the LORD in eight days : and on the sixteenth day of the first month they made an  
 18 end. Then they went in to Hezekiah the king within *the palace*, and said, We have cleansed  
 all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the  
 19 table of shewbread, with all the vessels thereof. Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz  
 in his reign did cast away when he trespassed, have we prepared and sanctified ; and, behold,  
 they are before the altar of the LORD.  
 20 Then Hezekiah the king arose early, and gathered the princes of the city, and went up  
 21 to the house of the LORD. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven  
 lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for  
 Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the  
 22 LORD. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on  
 the altar : and they killed the rams, and sprinkled the blood upon the altar : they killed also  
 23 the lambs, and sprinkled the blood upon the altar. And they brought near the he-goats  
 for the sin offering before the king and the congregation ; and they laid their hands upon  
 24 them : and the priests killed them, and they made a sin offering with their blood upon the  
 altar, to make atonement for all Israel : for the king commanded *that* the burnt offering and  
 25 the sin offering *should be made* for all Israel. And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD  
 with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David,  
 and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet : for the commandment was of the LORD  
 26 by his prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with  
 27 the trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And  
 when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also, and the trumpets, together  
 28 with the instruments of David king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and  
 the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded ; all this *continued* until the burnt offering was  
 29 finished. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present  
 30 with him bowed themselves and worshipped. Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes  
 commanded the Levites to sing praises unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph  
 the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.  
 81 Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD,  
 come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD. And the  
 congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings ; and as many as were of a willing  
 82 heart *brought* burnt offerings. And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congrega-  
 tion brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, and two hundred lambs :  
 83 all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. And the consecrated things were six hun-  
 84 dred oxen and three thousand sheep. But the priests were too few, so that they could not  
 flay all the burnt offerings : wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work  
 was ended, and until the priests had sanctified themselves : for the Levites were more up-  
 85 right in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests. And also the burnt offerings were  
 in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and with the drink offerings for every burnt  
 86 offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced,  
 and all the people, because of that which God had prepared for the people : for the thing was  
 done suddenly.

**30 : 1** And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and  
 Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover  
 2 unto the LORD, the God of Israel. For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all  
 3 the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. For they could  
 not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient num-  
 4 ber, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. And the thing was  
 5 right in the eyes of the king and of all the congregation. So they established a decree to  
 make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come  
 6 to keep the passover unto the LORD, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem : for they had not kept  
 it in great numbers in such sort as it is written. So the posts went with the letters from the  
 king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of  
 7 the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD, the God of Abraham,  
 Isaac, and Israel, that he may return to the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand  
 7 of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which  
 trespassed against the LORD, the God of their fathers, so that he gave them up to desolation,  
 8 as ye see. Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were ; but yield yourselves unto the  
 LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever, and serve the LORD  
 9 your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the  
 LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that led them cap-  
 tive, and shall come again into this land : for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful,

10 and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him. So the posts passed from  
 11 city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun : but they  
 12 laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and  
 13 of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. Also in Judah was the hand of  
 14 God to give them one heart, to do the commandment of the king and of the princes by the  
 15 word of the LORD. And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of  
 16 unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation. And they arose and  
 17 took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away,  
 18 and cast them into the brook Kidron. Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day*  
 19 of the second month : and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified them-  
 20 selves, and brought burnt offerings into the house of the LORD. And they stood in their  
 21 place after their order, according to the law of Moses the man of God : the priests sprinkled  
 22 the blood, *which they received* of the hand of the Levites. For there were many in the con-  
 23 gregation that had not sanctified themselves : therefore the Levites had the charge of killing  
 24 the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the LORD. For a  
 25 multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had  
 26 not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it is written. For  
 27 Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one that setteth his  
 28 heart to seek God, the LORD, the God of his fathers, though *he be not cleansed* according to  
 29 the purification of the sanctuary. And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the  
 30 people. And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleav-  
 31 ened bread seven days with great gladness : and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD  
 32 day by day, *singing* with loud instruments unto the LORD. And Hezekiah spake comfort-  
 33 ably unto all the Levites that were well skilled *in the service* of the LORD. So they did eat  
 34 throughout the feast for the seven days, offering sacrifices of peace offerings, and making  
 35 confession to the LORD, the God of their fathers. And the whole congregation took counsel  
 36 to keep other seven days : and they kept *other* seven days with gladness. For Hezekiah  
 37 king of Judah did give to the congregation for offerings a thousand bullocks and seven  
 38 thousand sheep ; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten  
 39 thousand sheep : and a great number of priests sanctified themselves. And all the congrega-  
 40 tion of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of  
 41 Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, re-  
 42 joiced. So there was great joy in Jerusalem : for since the time of Solomon the son of David  
 43 king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. Then the priests the Levites arose and  
 44 blessed the people : and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habita-  
 45 tion, even unto heaven.

31: 1 Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities  
 of Judah, and brake in pieces the pillars, and hewed down the Asherim, and brake down the  
 high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh,  
 until they had destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his  
 2 possession, into their own cities. And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and  
 the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, both the priests and the  
 Levites, for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to  
 3 praise in the gates of the camp of the LORD. *He appointed* also the king's portion of his  
 substance for the burnt offerings, *to wit*, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and  
 the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it  
 4 is written in the law of the LORD. Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusa-  
 lem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might give themselves to the  
 5 law of the LORD. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel gave  
 in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the  
 6 field ; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. And the children of Israel  
 and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and  
 sheep, and the tithe of dedicated things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God,  
 7 and laid them by heaps. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps,  
 8 and finished them in the seventh month. And when Hezekiah and the princes came and  
 9 saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel. Then Hezekiah questioned  
 10 with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. And Azariah the chief priest, of the  
 house of Zadok, answered him and said, Since *the people* began to bring the oblations into  
 the house of the LORD, we have eaten and had enough, and have left plenty : for the LORD  
 11 hath blessed his people ; and that which is left is this great store. Then Hezekiah com-  
 12 manded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD ; and they prepared them. And they  
 brought in the oblations and the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully : and over them  
 13 Conaniah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was second. And Jehiel, and  
 Azariah, and Nahath, and Asahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah,  
 and Mahath, and Benaiah, were overseers under the hand of Conaniah and Shimei his  
 brother, by the appointment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God.  
 14 And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter at the east *gate*, was over the freewill  
 15 offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things. And  
 under him were Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in  
 the cities of the priests, in their set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the  
 16 great as to the small : beside them that were reckoned by genealogy of males, from three  
 years old and upward, even every one that entered into the house of the LORD, as the duty

17 of every day required, for their service in their charges according to their courses; and them that were reckoned by genealogy of the priests by their fathers' houses, and the Levites 18 from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses; and them that were reckoned by genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness: also for the sons of Aaron the priests, which were in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, there were men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogy among the Levites. 20 And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah; and he wrought that which was good and right 21 and faithful before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.

## EVENTS OF HEZEKIAH'S REIGN.

(For Dates, see Section 3, page 51.)

*Hezekiah's Accession Year.* The first of his twenty-nine years: (1) 2 K. 16: 2, 20; 17: 1; 18: 1, 2, sixteenth of Ahaz, following the third of Hoshea; (2) 1 Chron. 5: 26; 2 K. 15: 29; 17: 3; 2 Chron. 30: 6-9, relations of Israel to Assyria, at the time; (3) 2 K. 16: 8, 10; 18: 7, relations of Judah to Assyria; (4) 2 Chron. 28: 18, to Philistia; (5) 2 Chron. 28: 19; 29: 8, 9, condition of Judah (captivity, not exile).

*His First Year* (not counted as in 2 K., but beginning the new year after his accession—the fifth of Hoshea). (1) 2 K. 18: 3-6, etc., religious policy of Hezekiah; (2) 17: 2, religious policy of Hoshea; (3) 2 K. 16: 10, 14-18; 2 Chron. 28: 21, 24; 29: 3, 5, 7, 16, 19, condition of the temple; (4) 2 Chron. 29: 3-36, cleansing of the temple; (5) 2 Chron. 30, the great passover, the second month; (6) 31: 1, breaking down the altars of false worship in Ephraim, Manasseh, etc.; (7) 2 Chron. 31, provisions for the service at Jerusalem; 31: 7, third to seventh month.

*Hezekiah's Prosperity.* (1) Rebellion against Assyria, 18: 7; (2) smiting of Philistines, 18: 8; (3) his riches and power, 2 Chron 31: 20, 21; 32: 27-29; 2 K. 20: 13; (4) connected with the rebellion of Hezekiah, Hoshea's refusal of tribute, and sending messengers to So, 2 K. 17: 4; (5) connected with this, the breaking of the rod that smote "Philistia, all of it," Isa. 14: 28, 29.

*Up to Hezekiah's Fourth Year,* 2 K. 17: 4; the king of Assyria imprisons Hoshea for refusing tribute, etc.

*Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Years of Hezekiah.* 2 K. 17; 18: 9-12, the siege and overthrow of Samaria.

*Hezekiah's Illness,* 2 K. 20: 1-11; Isa. 38. (1) 2 K. 18: 13, 2; 20: 6, the date of it; (2) 2 K. 20: 1-7, the prayer and healing; (3) 20: 6, the promise of deliverance from Assyria; (4) 2 K. 20: 8-11, the shadow on the dial; (5) Isa. 38: 9-20, Hezekiah's "writing."

*Hezekiah and Merodach-baladan,* 2 K. 20: 12-19; Isa. 39.

*Sennacherib's Great Invasion.* (1) 2 Chron. 32: 1, 2, his coming; (2) 2 Chron. 32: 3, 4, 30; 2 K. 20: 20, Hezekiah's waterworks; (3) 2 Chron. 32: 5-8, his other arrangements for defence; (4) 2 Chron. 32: 9-15; 2 K. 18: 17-35; Isa. 36: 2-20, Sennacherib's message from Lachish; (5) 2 K. 18: 36-19: 7, resulting acts of the officers, the king, and Isaiah, noting especially the form of the promise (verse 7); (6) 19: 8, 9, Tirhakah; (7) 2 Chron. 32: 16, 17, 18, 14; 2 K. 19: 9-18, Sennacherib's written messages; (8) 2 Chron. 32: 20, 19; 2 K. 19: 14-34, the prayer over these messages, and its answer; (9) 19: 35-37; 2 Chron. 32: 21, Jehovah's vengeance on Sennacherib.

*Death of Hezekiah,* 2 Chron. 32: 32, 33; 2 K. 20: 20, 21.

The biblical literature connected with this reign is not limited to the accounts contained in the historical books, but includes also many of the prophecies of Isaiah, Micah, and Nahum, some Psalms, and the last chapters of Proverbs. The known Assyrian literature for this period is even more voluminous than the biblical; and, at some points, quite as full in its details of Palestinian history. In a very large number of instances the two literatures mention or allude to the same persons, events, or customs. W. J. B.

**2 Chron. 29.** The history of Hezekiah's reign, which is here commenced, and carried through four chapters, stands in marked contrast with the corresponding portion of Kings (2 K. 18-20). While the writer of Kings fixes his eye mainly on civil affairs—on the two invasions of Sennacherib and on the embassy of Merodach-baladan, which he relates at length, passing lightly and hastily over Hezekiah's religious reformation (chap 18: 4-7), the author of Chronicles sets himself to give a full account of this latter, which he does in three chapters (29-31), compressing into the compass of one (chap. 32) the whole that he has to say of the civil history of the reign. Thus chaps. 29-31

of 2 Chron. contain matter which is almost wholly new ; while chap. 32 is little more than a brief summary of what the writer of Kings has related fully in the three chapters which he has devoted to this reign. B. C.

**29: 1, 2.** *Duration and character of Hezekiah's reign.* It began when he was five and twenty years old, and continued twenty-nine years. It would seem that a good mother had counteracted the evil influence of a bad father, in the formation of the character of Hezekiah. Her name is given, and her parentage. Zechariah, her father or grandfather, may have been the "faithful witness" of Isaiah (18: 2). In his character, Hezekiah stands with David and Josiah. These were counted the perfect kings, and furnished the standard models by which other kings were estimated. He did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah. He blended a thorough affection with a thorough devotion to Jehovah, and to the interests of His worship and His authority over the people. And this fidelity to Jehovah in His worship and authority furnishes the great test by which the character of the kings, both of Israel and Judah, is estimated. Here we find a supreme principle, applicable to all judgments of human character. Every one stands or falls by this test. Every one who rightly worships and truly obeys God possesses a character that is acceptable in His sight. B.

Hezekiah, the thirteenth king of Judah, succeeded his father Ahaz in the third year of Hoshea, the nineteenth and last king of Israel. In the very first year, perhaps, of his reign, he began the reformation of religion by reopening and repairing the doors of the Temple, which had been closed by Ahaz. His character is marked by the commendation which has not been repeated since Jehoshaphat, "He did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that David his father had done." P. S.

Of all the monarchs who ruled over the kingdom of Judah after its separation from Israel, Hezekiah is the most remarkable, and the interest which attaches to the history of the separate kingdom culminates in him. He was a statesman, a warrior, a poet, an antiquarian, an engineer, and the leader of a most important religious movement. Judea in his day seemed to be at the point of dissolution ; it was to him that she owed a recovery, which gave her a fresh lease of life, and enabled her to outlive her sister kingdom by nearly a century and a half. Hezekiah's political position when he ascended the throne was that of a tributary to Assyria.

His father's voluntary compact with Tiglath-pileser (2 K. 16: 7) involved his own subjection ; and nothing could set him free from this obligation, or restore his country to independence, but an open and avowed revolt. To this height of audacity he does not seem to have lifted himself at once. It rather appears that he paid his tribute, as it became due, regularly, both to Shalmaneser and to Sargon, deferring his open rebellion to the time of Sennacherib, Sargon's son and successor. Meanwhile, all the energies of his powerful and active mind were devoted to the internal condition of his country, and especially to the removal of those impious innovations which his father, Ahaz, had introduced into the arrangements of the Temple, and into the religious ceremonial generally, to the rooting out of idolatry, and to the re-establishment of the religion of Jehovah in its pristine purity and splendor. G. R.

**2 K. 18: 6.** *He clave to the Lord.* Other good kings had fallen away in their later years. Hezekiah remained firm to the last. The phrase "cleaving to God" is frequent in Deuteronomy, rare elsewhere.

**7.** *The Lord was with him.* This had been said of no king since David (2 Sam. 5: 10), not even of Solomon, of whom we are only told that the "wisdom of God was in him" (1 K. 3: 28). The phrase is very emphatic. B. C. —Hezekiah trusted in the Lord ; he clave to the Lord ; he departed not from following Him ; he kept His commandments as given to Moses. Trust, fidelity, obedience, and perseverance—in all these were his distinctive characteristics. Some kings had trusted, but not with so entire a heart ; some had been obedient, but not so fully ; some had been faithful for a time, but had failed to persevere. Hezekiah had the better record. God puts special honor on whole-hearted service. We are to see, however, that, exceptional as his goodness was, Hezekiah was not perfect. He had his sins, his failures too. The intention of the text is not to represent him as sinless, but only as pre-eminently great and good. J. O.

**2 Chron. 29: 3-5.** *His first good work, the reopening and cleansing of the Temple, and the re-establishment of the priesthood and their ministry in it.* This was commenced at the very outset of his reign. His first thought was of the worship of God, and his first purpose and effort was the restoration of that worship. The closed doors of the Sacred Porch were opened and repaired. The priests and Levites to whom was committed the care and the service of the Temple were gathered together from the

various portions of the land. First, Hezekiah bade them "sanctify" *themselves*, and then to cleanse the house of the Lord. We may remind our readers that the priests were descendants of the family of Aaron, and were among the Levites, or descendants of Levi. The priests were charged with the religious ministries of the Temple: the offering of sacrifices, and the burning of incense. The Levites aided the priests in their preparatory work. They also formed the great choir of singers, and fulfilled the functions of gatekeepers and guards of the Temple. Like the priests, they were a carefully educated class, and aided in the instruction of the people. The *sanctification* referred to here included a ceremonial washing with water, as well as a cleansing with sacrificial blood. It was applied to the vessels, the floor, and the walls of the building, after the accumulations of dust, and possibly of remaining idolatrous objects, had been removed. B.

We can never begin good things too early, and when we come into new positions, it is easier to take the right standing at first than to shift to it afterward. Hezekiah might have been excused if he had thought that the wretched state of political affairs left by Ahaz needed his first attention. Edomites on the east, Philistines on the west and south, Syrians and Assyrians on the north, compassed him about like bees, and worldly prudence would have said, "Look after these enemies to-day, and the Temple to-morrow." He was wiser than that, knowing that these were effects of the religious corruption, and so he went at that first. A. M.

6-9. *The exceeding guilt of their fathers, and how God had punished it.* It was Ahaz and the people of the preceding reign whom Hezekiah charged with this impious trespass against God. The particulars of his charge are instructive. They had done evil in God's sight by wilfully forsaking Him, and insultingly *turning the back upon Him*. They had barred up the doors of His sanctuary, after extinguishing its lights. And above all, they had despised the sacrifice and the incense, the double offering which symbolized the atonement for sin, and the intercession for the sinner. In a word they had closed the Temple doors, they had banished the Temple servitors, they had deliberately rejected the divinely appointed means of approach to Jehovah, and virtually outlawed God from His own house and His own supreme right over them. To this apostasy from God as its sufficient cause, Hezekiah ascribed all the sufferings of the people and the calamities that

had befallen the kingdom. Invasions of other nations, resulting in the draining of resources, the laying waste of cities, the destruction of life, the breaking up of families, and the immense numbers taken captive—all these humiliating and calamitous consequences they had witnessed. And the king declares that these events were the manifest tokens of the wrath of God upon Judah and Jerusalem. In these He has only fulfilled the threatening side of His ancient covenant with His people.

10, 11. *Hezekiah's purposed Covenant with God, and his charge to the ministers of the Temple.* He would restore prosperity by renewing the fulfilment of the conditions of God's mercy contained in His covenant. He declares this his purpose to the priests and Levites, in order that they might unite with him in its execution. This declaration was the more needful to the priests and the people because it involved an utter reversal of his father's policy. It indicated a new and lofty aim as characterizing the reign that was now commenced. There was courage as well as faith in God evinced by Hezekiah in this announcement and its subsequent execution. A point of practical suggestion is here presented. In the beginning of every great life-change, and frequently in the progress of the ordinary spiritual life, courage as well as faith is essential in the taking and the keeping of a stand for God and truth. The king's address indicates his kingly spirit. Though but a young man he addresses these older and more experienced men as children. He charges them in a tone of authority and tenderness to make faithful efforts to fulfil the ministry now assigned them. And he reminds them of their own special appointment of God to stand in His presence, and to serve Him by the offering of sacrifice, incense and praise. Let them unite with him in the great preparatory work by which Jehovah should be brought back to His Temple and prosperity restored to His people. . . . A practical suggestion. Since all believers are priests under the Christian system, all are needed in the ministry of truth among men, in order to the bringing of God's presence and His blessing upon men. B.

Hezekiah was in earnest, and his resolve was none the less right because it was moved by a desire to turn away the fierce anger of the Lord. Dread of sin's consequences and a desire to escape these is no unworthy motive, however some superfine moralists nowadays may call it so. It is becoming unfashionable to preach "the terror of the Lord." The more is the pity, and the less is the likelihood of per-

suading men. But, however excited, the firm determination (which does not wait for others to concur) that "as for me, I will serve the Lord," is the grand thing for us all to imitate. A. M.

**17.** The work of purification began on the first day of the first month, immediately after Hezekiah called the priests and Levites together and addressed them (verses 3-11). It commenced with the repair of the doors (verse 8), with the self-purification of the collected priests and Levites (verse 15), and probably with the cleansing of the courts. This occupied eight days. By the close of the eighth day they had reached the porch of the Temple. It took them then eight days to cleanse the Temple itself, and, consequently, the whole work was not finished till the sixteenth day.

**24. To make an atonement for all Israel.** The words "all Israel"—twice repeated in this verse—appear to be emphatic. Hezekiah aimed at reuniting once more the whole people of Israel, if not into a single state, yet, at any rate, into a single religious communion. The northern kingdom was in a condition approaching to anarchy. Since the downfall of the house of Jehu a succession of usurpers had borne rule for short terms. Four Assyrian invasions had swept over the country within the space of thirty-five years. The Syrian kingdom, hitherto a barrier against the Assyrian power, had been absorbed, and Samaria had been laid completely open to the assaults of her great adversary. The end was evidently approaching. Hoshea, the king contemporary with Hezekiah (2 K. 18 : 1), ruled, not as an independent monarch, but as an Assyrian feudatory (*ibid.* 17 : 3). Under these circumstances Hezekiah designed to invite the revolted tribes to return, if not to their old temporal, at least to their old spiritual allegiance. (See chap. 30 : 5-10.) In order, therefore, to prepare the way for this return, he included "all Israel" in the expiatory sacrifice, by which he prefaced his restoration of the old worship.

**27. Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering.** All had hitherto been preparatory. Now Hezekiah gave orders that "the burnt offering"—*i. e.*, the daily morning sacrifice—should be offered upon the brazen altar in front of the porch, thus restoring and reinstating the regular Temple service. A burst of music gave notice to the people of the moment when the old worship recommenced. B. C.

**When the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began also.** The

lesson is clear. We all want happiness—that our joy may be full. But we cannot have it by aiming at it directly. Begin to sacrifice, to give to God what you really value; say, "I will not offer unto the Lord my God that which doth cost me nothing." Give your money, interest, time, effort. Copy the example of Him who "went about doing good," and "pleased not Himself." Try to make lives brighter, homes happier, business more pure. Take up the cross. Then this bit of Old World history shall record your experience: "When the burnt offering began, then the song of the Lord began also"—a song which grew louder and mightier as the sacrifice went on, and never ended until the sacrifice itself came to an end. *J. Ogle.*—The words, however strangely they sound at first, are literally true as the history of many a man's life. From the moment that it began to live for other people, the nature which had no song in it before became jubilant with music. The soul that trifles and toys with self-sacrifice never can get its true joy and power. Only the soul that, with an overwhelming impulse and a perfect trust, gives itself up forever to the life of other men, finds the delight and peace which such complete self-surrender has to give. There is another reason why it would seem to be absolutely necessary that man should have the power of finding pleasure in his self-sacrifices, in the actual fulfilment of his completed tasks, the actual doing of the necessary duties of his life, and that is found in the fact that joy or delight in what we are doing is not a mere luxury; it is a means, a help, for the more perfect doing of our work. Joy in one's work is the consummate tool without which the work may be done indeed, but without which the work will always be done slowly, clumsily, and without its finest perfectness. The man who really lives in the world of Christ's redemption claims his self-sacrifices. He goes up to his martyrdom with a song. To live in this world and do nothing for one's own spiritual self, or for fellow-man, or for God is a terrible thing. There is no happy life except in self-consecration. *Phillips Brooks.*

**2 Chron., Chap. 30.** The central fact of this portion of Hezekiah's history is the celebration of the first Passover; and the most touching portion of the history we find in the letters of the king, sent throughout all Israel as well as Judah, inviting the return of all the people of God remaining in the entire land to the service of Jehovah. B.

**30 : 1. Hezekiah sent to all Israel**



and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh. The "Ephraim and Manasseh" of the second clause must be taken as equivalent to the "all Israel" of the first; since it is evident that the letters were sent to the remoter tribes as well as to the nearer ones. (See verses 10 and 11.)

**2. In the second month.** The law allowed individuals to keep the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month, instead of the fourteenth day of the first, in case of absence on a journey or temporary defilement (Num. 9:10, 11). Hezekiah and his counsellors considered that this permission might, under the circumstances, be extended to the whole people. It had been found impossible to complete the cleansing of the Temple till the fourteenth day of the first month was past (chap. 29:17); and even then the purification of the priests was far from complete (*ibid.*, 34); moreover, if the Passover had been held at once, few, comparatively speaking, would have been gathered to it. It was, therefore, determined to defer it to the 14th of the second month, which allowed time for the priests generally to purify themselves, and for proclamation of the festival to be made throughout all Israel. B. C.

**3. Proclamation throughout all Israel.** We may reasonably suppose that this took place with the consent of Hoshea, king of Israel; for he has the best character given of him of all the kings of Israel; and, though "he did evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 K. 17:2), yet it is added in the next words, "but not as the kings of Israel that were before him;" which probably implies that he did not prevent his subjects from attending their Divine worship at Jerusalem, as other kings had done. *Wells.*

**4. Yield yourselves unto the Lord.** Before you can come into communion with Him you must come into covenant with Him. "Give the hand to the Lord; so the word is—*i.e.*, "Consent to take Him for your God:" a bargain is confirmed by giving the hand: "Strike this bargain. Join yourselves to Him in an everlasting covenant. *Subscribe with the hand* to be His. Give Him your hand in token of giving Him your heart; devote yourselves to His service, to work for Him. *Yield to Him*"—*i.e.*, "Come to His terms; come under His government; stand it not out any longer against Him. *Yield to Him*, to be absolutely and universally at His command, at His disposal; to be and do and have and suffer whatever He pleases. In order to this, be not *stiffnecked*

*as your fathers were*; let not your wicked wills rise up in rebellion against the will of God. Say not that you will do what you please, but resolve to do what He pleases." H.

**10-13.** The response made to this appeal was not very hearty nor very general; but still the appeal succeeded to a certain extent. As Hezekiah's messengers "passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh even unto Zebulun," they were for the most part treated with derision—the people "laughed them to scorn, and mocked them" (verse 10); but, nevertheless, there were "divers of Asher and of Manasseh and of Zebulun" (verse 11), and likewise of "Ephraim and Issachar" (verse 18)—amounting altogether to "a great multitude" (*ibid.*), who "humbled themselves," and accepted the royal invitation, and "came to Jerusalem" (verse 11). In Judah all were of "one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes," and there "assembled much people to keep the feast . . . a very great congregation" (verses 12, 13). G. R.

**15.** The symbolic character of the Passover revealed the heart of God in all the riches of its love. It proclaimed, in the most graphic way, the great fundamental truth, that, boundless as God's willingness is to save sinners, yet salvation can only rest upon the firm foundation of perfect righteousness. There can be no manifestation of love at the cost of justice and holiness. The Passover was a *sacrifice*. God expressly called it by that name (Ex. 12:27). It was a *bloody sacrifice*, in which the blood occupied not a secondary, but the very first place; it was the *conditio sine qua non* of the redemption. Whatever may have been the spiritual privileges which Israel possessed as God's chosen people, none of these could have saved them from the sword of the angel of death. It is difficult to conceive how the truth that without sacrificial blood there is no salvation could have been proclaimed more emphatically. This was the manifestation of the great truth of God's eternal and unchangeable *justice*. But, at the same time, there was as emphatic a manifestation of God's eternal and unchangeable *love* to His people. It was not *their* blood which God desired to see. He provided *another* blood to be shed in the place of theirs. This fact could not fail to set the spiritually minded a-thinking seriously over grave questions. That the blood of lambs could not save indeed must have been perceived by such men as David and Isaiah. They must have been looking out for a Lamb which God Himself was to

provide. At length this Lamb appeared in the flesh. And with a shout of joyful surprise John cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world." *J. de Liefde.*

**17. There were many in the congregation that were not sanctified.** Who these were is explained in the next verse. The greater number of the Israelites who had come to keep the feast were involved in some ceremonial or moral defilement, from which there was no time for them to purify themselves. As the Passover was being held in the second month, and there could consequently be no "little Passover" for these (see Num. 9:6-12), Hezekiah decided that they should be admitted to the feast, notwithstanding their legal uncleanness (see verse 19). But, on account of this uncleanness, they were not to slay their own lambs, but to delegate the office to the Levites. B. C.

**18.** Hezekiah's prayer to God for the forgiveness of this irregularity. It was his zeal that had called them together in such haste, and he would not that any should fare the worse for being straitened of time in their preparation; he therefore thought himself concerned to be an intercessor for those that ate the passover otherwise than it was written, that there might not be wrath upon them from the Lord. His prayer was short but to the purpose. *The good Lord pardon every one in the congregation that has fixed, engaged or prepared his heart to those services, though the ceremonial preparation be wanting. The great thing required in our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances, is, that we prepare our hearts to seek Him; that we be sincere and upright in all we do, that the inward man be engaged and employed in it, and that we make heart work of it; it is all nothing without this. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part.* H.

If we were to analyze the influences that blended in this great religious movement, we might say—the ritual services of sacrifices, altars, Temple, were present in their full strength; perhaps the stronger for having been long remitted. Coupled with those were the outpouring of song; the teaching of the good knowledge of the Lord; the social power of an immense congregation; the services protracted till the hearts of the people were profoundly impressed; and not least, the immediate historic antecedents—that fearful scourging of war and captivity which had sent death into so many households, and borne away so many loved ones into a captivity from which nothing but national repentance could move the

Almighty to restore them. Nor let us forget the influence of the noble king, leading on with his whole heart; consecrating treasure without stint, and promptly foremost in every point where his hand could touch the springs of a great movement. All in all it was a scene of moral sublimity rarely equalled.

**31.** When this great Passover scene was finished, the people were in heart prepared for one more service imperatively demanded—viz., the destruction of idol-images, altars and groves throughout all the cities and high places of both Judah and Israel. That they should go forth *en masse* throughout Judah on this mission was to be expected. Such a reformation would have been wretchedly superficial and shallow without it. But that they should have gone forth over all the kingdom of Hoshea as if there were no such king there; that they should go where they would with no apparent resistance—this is truly a wonderful proof of the zealous enthusiasm and of the moral power of this great reformation. Recalling to mind the fact that this great revival and this breaking down of idols in the northern kingdom preceded the invasion under Shalmaneser by only three years, and the total destruction of Samaria and the entire northern kingdom by not more than six years, we shall see reason to regard this as not only God's last call of mercy to thousands in the northern kingdom, but as His grand providential agency for sifting out His own chosen ones; gathering in all whom the most efficient agency could avail to save before the final storm should sweep the nation forever into ruin. H. C.

**2 K. 18:4. The brasen serpent that Moses had made.** On the making of this serpent, see Num. 21:9. Its history from the time when it was set up to the date of Hezekiah's reformation is a blank. Some suppose that it had always been preserved in the tabernacle, and had been brought by Solomon from Gibeon and placed in the Temple. The present passage favors this supposition; for it implies a long-continued worship of the serpent by the Israelites generally, and not a mere recent worship of it by the Jews. **The children of Israel did burn incense to it.** We need not suppose that this idolatry, though ancient and long continued, was more than occasional. The remembrance of the old cures wrought might induce those bitten by venomous reptiles to seek help in this quarter. A leaning to ophiolatry, such as is found widely spread through the East, may have led others to turn their devotion hitherward. B. C.

This serpent, which was appointed for cure to Israel, at last stings them to death by idolatrous abuse. What poison there is in idolatry, that makes even antidotes deadly! As Moses therefore raised the serpent, so Hezekiah pulled it down: God commanded the raising of it, God approved the demolishing of it. Superstitious use can mar the very institutions of God; how much more the most wise and well-grounded devices of men! *Bp. H.*—That image of brass, instead of rendering an important spiritual service, became the occasion of idolatrous homage. Instead of leading the thoughts of men's minds to God, it drew them from Him; and instead of reverencing Him, they worshipped it. So the brave and wise king, daring all reproach and rejecting all half measures, brake it up before the eyes of the people, and, in the act of destruction, called it "Nehushtan"—*i.e.*, a bit of brass. This he did that he might impress on their minds, by word as well as deed, that this image, which they had turned into an idol, was nothing but a piece of workmanship, made of man's hands, and to be unmade of him at his will. The principle which lies at the root of this somewhat daring and very decisive act, is this—that *no good thing, however good it be, must be allowed to come between our souls and God, to rob Him of His service; that, if anything does so come, a strong hand must be used, if need be, a destructive one—to take it away; or, to put the truth in a more positive form, that whatever means we use for worship or instruction must not be turned into an end, but must be resolutely and determinedly employed as a means to bring the mind into the presence of God's truth and the heart into communion with Himself.* *W. Clarkson.*

To the description of the reformation inaugurated by the piety of Hezekiah, it seems desirable to add some further particulars, either illustrative of the text or derived from other notices in Holy Scripture. As regards the trustworthiness of the account of the sacrificial worship in the restored Temple—that it was not of later invention, and designed to bear out the priestly institutions first enforced in the time of Ezra—we have to point to the important fact that the number of sacrifices and sin offerings in the time of Hezekiah notably differs from that at the dedication of the Temple in the time of Ezra (cf. 2 Chron. 29: 21, 32 with Ezra 6: 17). This, considering especially the symbolism of numbers, shows that the one account could not have been framed upon the other. It follows that the Mosaic institutions must have existed in and before the time of Hezekiah, and could not, as

a certain school of critics contends, have originated with the priesthood at a much later period. Indeed, as we follow the present line of argument by a comparison of the services in the time of Hezekiah with the Mosaic institutions to which they bear reference, the conviction grows upon us not only of the existence of the latter, but of their general acknowledgment, since, keeping in view the circumstances of the previous reign, it is impossible to suppose that all this could have been "invented" in the first year of Hezekiah's reign. And as connected with this we mark that not only were the liturgical services conformed to a previous model—the Davidic—but that the hymns chanted were in "the words of David and of Asaph the seer" (2 Chron. 29: 30). This seems not only to imply the existence at the time of Davidic and Asaphite Psalms—the absence of any mention of other Psalm collections here deserving special notice—but even to indicate some orderly collection of these Psalms in books. In short, it casts light on the beginning of the present arrangement of the Psalter in five books. It may well have been that, subject to later revision, the former collection of Psalms consisting, roughly speaking, of the two first books of Psalms (now Ps. 1–41; 42–72), was now enriched by the addition of a further collection—roughly speaking, the present third Book of Psalms (Ps. 73–89), which in its present form begins with an Asaphite Psalm (Ps. 73), and has in succession eleven Psalms of the same authorship (Ps. 73–83). But whatever our view, or more accurately our conjectures, on this subject, there cannot at least be doubt that Hezekiah actively busied himself, under competent guidance, with the collection and arrangement of the existing sacred literature of Israel. This is expressly mentioned as regards a part of "the Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah collected." A. E.

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The narrative before us illustrates the fact that when God converts men from amid surroundings of great depravity, He often has some great and signal service for them to do for Him. Such was the case with King Hezekiah. God summoned him to the reformation of a kingdom. He trained him for it by permitting him to see the guilt and the ruin of his father's reign. When the critical time came, He lifted him out of the slough of iniquity, and made him one of the signal examples of a godly prince, whose name should give lustre to the Jewish throne forever after.

The work of King Hezekiah illustrates the moral power of one man in effecting a great work to which God has called him. From the narrative in the lesson it appears that the reformation of the kingdom was at first the idea of Hezekiah alone. "It is in my heart," he says, "to make a covenant with the Lord." The movement grew up silently in his own heart. God and he planned it alone. Probably he had been brooding over it and praying over it for years. Men do not spring into such honor at a bound. At

last he was the soul of the reform. The idea was his; the measures were his; the execution was his. So it often is in other great works of God. Some one man heads it; puts his soul into it; gives his life to it; rouses other men, and energizes them in it. There is almost no limit to the power of a live man called of God to a great life's work. Other men fall back to the right and to the left, and let such a man go up the highway of the King, while they fall in at the rear and acknowledge His lead. *Phelps.*

## Section 40.

### REIGN OF HEZEKIAH (*Continued*).

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS AND RECOVERY. HIS PSALM OF GRATITUDE. EMBASSY OF MERODACH-BALADAN. HEZEKIAH'S SIN AND ISAIAH'S PREDICTION OF PUNISHMENT.

ISAIAH 38 : 1-22 ; 39 : 1-8.

**Isa. 38 :** 1 IN those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, and said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears : behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria : and I will defend this city. And this shall be the sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken : behold, I will cause the shadow on the steps, which is gone down on the dial of Ahaz with the sun, to return backward ten steps. So the sun returned ten steps on the dial whereon it was gone down.

9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness.

10 I said, In the noontide of my days I shall go into the gates of the grave :

2 KINGS 20 : 1-19 ; 2 CHRONICLES 32 : 24-31.

**2 K. 20 :** 1 IN those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order ; for thou shalt die, and not live.

2 Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle part of the city, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and say to Hezekiah the prince of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears : behold, I will heal thee : on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years ; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria ; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. And Isaiah said, Take a cake of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up unto the house of the LORD the third day? And Isaiah said, This shall be the sign unto thee from the LORD, that the

I am deprived of the residue of my years.  
 11 I said, I shall not see the LORD, *even* the LORD in the land of the living :  
 I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.  
 12 Mine age is removed, and is carried away from me as a shepherd's tent :  
 I have rolled up like a weaver my life ; he will cut me off from the loom :  
 From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.  
 18 I quieted *myself* until morning ; as a lion, so he breaketh all my bones :  
 From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.  
 14 Like a swallow *or* a crane, so did I chatter ; I did mourn as a dove : mine eyes fail *with looking* upward ;  
 O LORD, I am oppressed, be thou my surety.  
 15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it :  
 I shall go softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.  
 16 O Lord, by these things men live, And wholly therein is the life of my spirit: Wherefore recover thou me, and make me to live.  
 17 Behold, *it was for my peace that* I had great bitterness :  
 But thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption ;  
 For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.  
 18 For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee :  
 They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.  
 19 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day :  
 The father to the children shall make known thy truth.  
 20 The LORD is *ready* to save me :  
 Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments  
 All the days of our life in the house of the LORD.  
 21 Now Isaiah had said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil,  
 22 and he shall recover. Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?  
**39 : 1** At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah : for he heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.  
 2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and

LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken : shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or go  
 10 back ten steps? And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to decline ten steps : nay, but let the shadow return  
 11 backward ten steps. And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD : and he brought the shadow ten steps backward, by which it had gone down on the dial of Ahaz.  
 12 At that time Berodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah : for he had heard  
 18 that Hezekiah had been sick. And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures : there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.  
 14 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen : there is nothing among my treasures that I have  
 16 not shewed them. And Isaiah said unto  
 17 Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried to Babylon : nothing shall be left, saith the  
 18 LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away ; and they shall be eunuchs  
 19 in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, Is it not so, if peace and truth shall be in my days?

## 2 CHRONICLES 32 : 24-31.

24 In those days Hezekiah was sick even unto death : and he prayed unto the LORD ; and he spake unto him, and gave him a  
 25 sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him ; for his heart was lifted up : therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them  
 27 in the days of Hezekiah. And Hezekiah

shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious oil, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures : there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed  
 8 them not. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me,  
 4 even from Babylon. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen : there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.  
 5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the  
 6 word of the LORD of hosts. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Baby-  
 7 lon : nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the  
 8 king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

had exceeding much riches and honour : and he provided him treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all man-  
 28 ner of goodly vessels ; storehouses also for the increase of corn and wine and oil ; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and flocks in  
 29 folds. Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance : for God had given him very much  
 30 substance. This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah  
 31 prospered in all his works. Howbeit in *the business of* the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

THE reader will note the transposition of the chapters in this and the next Sections. The simple and sufficient reason is that Hezekiah's sickness and restoration, and the embassy of Baladan occurred some years before the great invasion of Sennacherib and the miraculous destruction of his host. The evidence of this may be found in the notes immediately following. B.

**2 K. 20 : 1. In those days.** This note of time is very ambiguous. As it stands, it should (apparently) refer to the period of the death of Sennacherib and accession of Esarhaddon, or B.C. 680. But Hezekiah seems to have died B.C. 697 ; and his illness, if the number fifteen is correct in verse 6, must really belong to B.C. 718 or 714, a date which falls early in the reign of Sargon. We may conjecture that the writer of Kings found the narrative of this chapter, which has a unity of its own, altogether separate from the other records of Hezekiah, and added it in the state in which he found it, without intending to fix its date by the opening words. Its true chronological place in the narrative is prior to all the other facts related of Hezekiah except his religious reforms. B. C.

The narrative of Hezekiah's sickness and of the embassy of Merodach-baladan, which in an abbreviated form is also given in the Book of Isaiah, must, on literary grounds and from its

position in this history, be regarded as an appendix similar to that added to the account of David's reign in the closing chapters of the Second Book of Samuel. Whether or not it was taken from a special and distinct record, or else inserted in this place in order not to break the continuity of a narrative which had a spiritual meaning and object of its own, it is certain that the events which it records could not have been posterior to the final departure of Sennacherib from the soil of Palestine. After that there could not have been occasion for such anxiety in reference to the king of Assyria as to be met by the Divine promise in 2 K. 20 : 6 ; nor yet, from what we know of the history of Merodach-baladan, could he then have sent such an embassy with the manifest purpose of an alliance against Assyria, nor, finally, would Hezekiah then have encouraged such overtures. A. E.

The important data are that Hezekiah reigned twenty-nine years (2 K. 18 : 2) ; that after his sickness he lived (and reigned) fifteen years (Isa. 38 : 5 and 2 K. 20 : 6), and consequently had reigned fourteen already. There being no important counter testimony, it is safe to accept the promise made to Hezekiah (chap. 38 : 6) as practically deciding in favor of the priority of the sickness, since the Lord couples with the promise of fifteen more years, that of deliverance from Assyria. " And I will deliver

position in this history, be regarded as an appendix similar to that added to the account of David's reign in the closing chapters of the Second Book of Samuel. Whether or not it was taken from a special and distinct record, or else inserted in this place in order not to break the continuity of a narrative which had a spiritual meaning and object of its own, it is certain that the events which it records could not have been posterior to the final departure of Sennacherib from the soil of Palestine. After that there could not have been occasion for such anxiety in reference to the king of Assyria as to be met by the Divine promise in 2 K. 20 : 6 ; nor yet, from what we know of the history of Merodach-baladan, could he then have sent such an embassy with the manifest purpose of an alliance against Assyria, nor, finally, would Hezekiah then have encouraged such overtures. A. E.

thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city." It is scarcely supposable that this would have been said *after* the great catastrophe. Assuming that the sickness was prior to the fall of the Assyrian, the latter may have been put first in order as being naturally connected with the antecedent prophecies; and on the other hand, the sickness last in order as being in like manner connected with the visit of the embassy from Babylon, and that, with the allusions to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon through the aid of Cyrus as set forth in chaps. 44 and 45. H. C.

**Isa. 38 : 1 ; 2 K. 20 : 1. Thou shalt die, and not live.** Here we see the difference between a simple prediction and a prophetic warning. A message, thus addressed to a person, not spoken of him to others, is a call to repentance and prayer, not the revelation of a fixed, unalterable decree. Such was the message of Jonah to Nineveh; and such the address to Shebna (22 : 15-19). The last mention of him as a suppliant before Isaiah in sackcloth, side by side with Eliakim, makes it likely that the sentence on him, while in part fulfilled, was in part repealed, as the whole is here in the case of Hezekiah. In Jer. 18 : 7-9, the law of such conditional warnings, in form resembling prophecies, is clearly laid down. *Birks.*

This message was not a Divine decree that he should die, but an announcement from Jehovah to Hezekiah that his malady was deadly, and that under the laws of nature he should surely die. Escape for the king by the use of human remedies was hopeless; his sickness, in the regular course of nature, was unto death, and unless the God above nature and above disease should interpose to recover His servant, Hezekiah, the king must surely die. The message of Isaiah was intended to turn the thoughts of the king away from all human physicians and earthly remedies, and to fix his attention on the God who not only had power over health and disease, but also over life and death; and it was therefore one of the divinely ordained means to the accomplishment of the divinely ordained end—viz., the recovery of Hezekiah from the sickness which was otherwise unto death. It was the will of God that the king should not die, but live. But this will of God was unknown to Hezekiah, and as he had been informed by the Lord through the prophet that human remedies would be in vain, he turned his face to the wall and addressed himself to God as the only Being in the universe who could save him from going down to the grave.

There was no vital force in the king to overcome the power of the disease; there was no remedy known to his physicians that could arrest the progress of his malady; there was no *vis medicatrix nature* that could bring restoration and health. Unless a personal God, above nature and with power over disease and death, should interpose, Hezekiah must die. *Pitser.*

The natural repugnance to death in the midst of the vigor of life; the peculiar circumstances of the land, as yet not delivered from the dominion of Assyria; the probable absence as yet of a legitimate successor to the throne—all these things combined make the tears and prayers of Hezekiah perfectly intelligible. It is certain, at least, that his prayer for the lengthening out of his days may be termed in our mouths both *natural* and *permissible*, when we see ourselves, or those dear to us, brought apparently to the verge of the grave. The petition, "Lord, take me not away in the midst of my days" (Ps. 103 : 24), is legitimate from a Christian standpoint. Although we have long known that there is an infinitely higher life than that on earth, still this is to the Christian a treasure; and perfect indifference on this point, especially in our best years, is not a healthy, but a sickly sign. Like Hezekiah, we have also here below an important task to fulfil. Above all, our own preparation for eternity may be furthered by the prolonging of our stay on earth: the longer in the summer the sickle is kept back from the grain, the more time has it to become fully ripe. Even of itself, the quiet prayer in days of sickness and distress relieves the oppressed soul: even before Isaiah returned, the suffering prince was unquestionably brought nearer to God. And when now the man of God came to announce to him, not that God's counsel had altered, but that the trial of his faith was turned into a crowning mercy and that fifteen years were added to his life, assuredly then the surprised Hezekiah received abundant material to frame therefrom a thankful song of praise to God. *Van O.*

No solemn message from the unseen world comes to us, as it once came to Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." Before the work of death begins, we know not which of our friends and acquaintances will pass away soonest. It may be the old and gray-haired, who have nothing left to live or hope for in the world; it may be the sick who have lingered long on the perilous edge of death, and whose life has been endurance, not enjoyment; or it may be the young and healthy, to whom death is a far-off cloud,

no bigger than a man's hand, casting no shadow on their sunny horizon. It may be the fruitful vine or the barren fig-tree, the heavenly minded Christian or the worldly-hearted professor. Who is to be the first to receive the message to pass hence? We know not. *Macmillan*.—We live in a universe of death. The phenomenon is common to us, but no familiarity can rob it of its dreadfulness; for the dead, who are the more in number, have kept their awful secret unrevealed, and the child who died yesterday knows more than can be guessed at by the thousand millions of living men. Yet this death is the least and the least dreaded part of that other, second, spiritual death. *Farrar*.

There is nothing more certain than death—nothing more uncertain than the time of dying. I will be therefore be prepared for that at all times which may come at any time, and must come at one time or another. I shall not hasten my death by being still ready, but sweeten it. It makes me not die the sooner, but the better. *Warwick*.—We cannot see before us. No hand can tear one leaf from the sealed book where the recording angel has written against all our names the day of our great change. A veil shuts close down before our eyes on the very spot where we stand. This year, or another; yourself first, or one you love better than yourself; by slow decline, or swift destruction: these are secrets. But there is no dimness over the command that points us to the open way of life; no uncertainty in the immortal promise, "Set thy house in order;" and then, though "absent from the body," thou shalt be present with the "Father of Jesus Christ, our Lord, of whom the whole family, in heaven and earth, is named." F. D. H.

Willing or unwilling, fit or unfit to die, voyagers to a land of bliss or bound to misery, many have entered on their last year. Like time and tide, death—regardless of his convenience and deaf to his prayers—will wait on no man. Since death is gain to the Christian, and through faith in Christ may be so to all, we should familiarize our minds with that event: beginning every year, and indeed every day, as if it were to be—what it may be—our last. To be prepared for death, so prepared that it may be the happiest event that ever befell us, so prepared that we may confront this king of terrors without the shadow of a doubt or any sense of fear, so prepared that we shall be better pleased to go than to stay—let us work out our salvation with fear and trembling; looking to Jesus for pardon, and to God

to work in us by His Holy Spirit both to will and to do of His good pleasure. *Guthrie*.

In every earthly enterprise we anticipate its bearings and results; we weigh, before we meet them, every obstacle, every interest which may come in conflict with our purpose; we count every cost of advantage or disadvantage, we reach forward our thoughts to contemplate every feature, promising or unpromising, of the probable result. And this is universally admitted to be the course of true wisdom. Not *less surely* is it the part of a wise and thinking man to pursue a similar course with reference to the life to come. Not less wise is his conduct who anticipates by careful thought the consequences of his departure, the ties that must then be broken, the office and influence that must be resigned, the possessions that must be relinquished, the pause that must ensue to all his schemes. Above all, not less wise is his course who solemnly, deeply ponders the more positive, momentous results of the change of state, the scenes upon which he must enter, the abiding character he must bear, the irreversible judgment he must meet, and the unalterable destiny he must experience in the sphere of an eternal being. As, compared with these stupendous themes, all other subjects of thought are mean and insignificant, so *incomparably wise* is he who habitually ponders these, who gives all the strength of his mind and the energy of his heart to their frequent, deliberate, prayerful contemplation. Knowing that death is to finish his works, to fix his character and place him forever and irremovably in paradise or perdition, incomparably wise is he who makes his daily life one prolonged act of preparation and readiness for his one great and changeless change of existence. B.

The fact that there is a time as surely appointed to us as to Hezekiah, although we are not allowed that knowledge of the fact which he possessed, ought to teach us patience in quiet waiting upon God. It is not in man, whatever be his rage, to take one hour of our appointed life from us, or to add one moment to the time of our sorrow. If our very hairs are all numbered, much more are all our days. Let us, therefore, honor God by having good thoughts of Him, knowing that whether our times be short or long, calm or stormy, they are appointed times; appointed by One who loves us with exceeding love, although He well remembers that we are but dust. *Kittó*.

Christianity is as needful to *live* by as to *die* by. It is quite as solemn a thing to say, "This year thou shalt *live*," as to say, "This year



thou shalt die." We have a Gospel to preach that claims, indeed, to be the only thing that can make a man die rightly; but which claims a higher glory than that—to be the only thing that can make him live rightly. A. M.—To be really alive in some sincere work is to have solved the mystery of life and mastered the fear of death. Then to die is only one of the accidents and incidents of our unending life, and no evil. To die out and even anticipate the body's dying is what we have to dread—to come to the end of earth with a sense of emptiness and exhaustion, a broken cistern, a worn-out piece of mechanism, a candle burned to the socket, a ball spent before the mark was reached. "It is as natural," says Lord Bacon, "to die, as to be born; and to the little infant, perhaps, the one is as painful as the other. He that dies in an earnest pursuit is like one that is wounded in hot blood, who for the time scarce feels the hurt; and therefore a mind fixed and bent upon somewhat that is good doth avert the dolours of death." *R. Ellis.*

How often has He succored me, when nature and art have failed? How has He eased my pained limbs, and upheld an emaciated skeleton? I have had *fifty years* added to my days, though I expected not to live one of them: and what strange deliverances have been wrought for me, upon the importunate requests of many hundreds of my praying friends? How have I been kept in ordinary health and safety, when the raging *pestilence* came near my habitation, and consumed an *hundred thousand citizens*? And how was my dwelling preserved, when I saw (*London*) the glory of the land in flames? These and many more are my *experiences* of that wonderful mercy which has measured my pilgrimage and filled up my days. Never did God break His promise with me. Never did He fail me, or forsake me. And shall I now distrust Him at last? "To Thee, O Lord, 'as to a faithful Creator, I commit my soul.' I know that Thou art 'the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Thee, and keep Thy commandments. Thou art faithful, who has called me to the fellowship of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.' Thy faithfulness has saved me from temptation, and kept me from prevailing evil, and will 'preserve my whole spirit, and soul and body, unto the coming of Christ.' It is 'in faithfulness Thou hast afflicted me;' and shall I not trust Thee to save me?" *Baxter.*

3. And he said, Ah Jehovah, remember, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in

*truth and with a whole heart, and that which is good in Thine eyes I have done.* The figure of *walking before God* includes the ideas of communion with Him and subjection to Him, and is therefore more comprehensive than the kindred phrase of *walking with Him*. By *truth* we are here to understand sincerity and constancy. This verse is not an expostulation nor self-praise, but an appeal to the only satisfactory evidence of his sincerity. A.—Hezekiah does not demand a reward from God for his good services, but begs that God would remember, not how he had reformed the kingdom, taken away the high places, cleansed the Temple and revived neglected ordinances; but, which was *better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices*, how he had approved himself to God with a single eye and an honest heart, not only in these eminent performances, but in an even, regular course of holy living; *I have walked before Thee in truth and sincerity, and with a perfect, that is, an upright heart;* for uprightness is our Gospel perfection. H.

5. Hezekiah had been a second David, following more closely in his steps than any other royal son of his. This prominent fact of his life had been involved in Hezekiah's prayer: "I have walked before Thee with a perfect heart," and is here tacitly admitted in the Lord's gracious answer. The tenderness of the reply is precious: "I have heard thy prayer; I have seen thy tears." Oh, truly, God does hear the imploring cry of pressing want and strong desire. Not a tear ever fell in His sight unheeded. There are thousands of prayers for prolonged life which God cannot wisely grant; but He loves to grant them when He wisely can. This case stands a witness to the loving-kindness of His heart. H. C.

2 K. 20: 9. It is not difficult to perceive the symbolical significance of this sign. As Isaiah had been commissioned to offer to Ahaz "a sign" of the promised deliverance, and to leave him the choice of it, "either in the depth or in the height above" (Isa. 7: 11), so here a similar alternative was presented to Hezekiah. As Ahaz in his trust in natural means and his distrust of Jehovah had refused, so Hezekiah in his distrust of natural means and trust of Jehovah asked for a sign. And lastly, even as Hezekiah had feared that his life-day would have ended in its midday hour, so now, when it was to be lengthened, did the falling shadow climb up again the ten steps to its midday mark. But there are also deeper lessons to be learned from this history. The change in the announcement of what was to befall Hezekiah,

in answer to his prayer, is of eternal meaning. It encourages us "always to pray"—not excluding from the range of our petitions what are commonly called "things temporal." And yet the very idea of prayer also excludes any thought of the absolute certainty of such answer as had been primarily contemplated in the prayer. For prayer and its answer are not mechanically, they are morally connected, just as between Isaiah's promised sign and its bestowal the prayer of the prophet intervened (verse 11). As miracle is not magic, so prayer is not necessitarianism; and on looking back upon our lives we have to thank God as often for prayers unanswered as for prayers answered. Further, the lessons taught the king first by his danger and then by his restoration were precisely those which Hezekiah needed to learn if, obedient to the admonitions of Isaiah, and believing the promise of the Lord, he was consistently to carry out the will of Jehovah amid the temptations and difficulties of the Assyrian invasion. This not only because he had had experience of the truth of prophetic promise, but because he had learned, as he could not otherwise have been taught, that God answered prayer; that He was merciful and forgiving, and able to turn aside the most threatening danger, even at the extreme moment. In truth, what was afterward witnessed in the deliverance of Jerusalem was on a large scale the same that Hezekiah himself had experienced in his healing. Thus the lessons of his recovery were intended as spiritual preparation for what was so soon to follow. A. E.

**11.** The fact here announced is an optical or sensible miracle, the reversed motion of the sun's shadow in the sun-dial of Ahaz. The words themselves leave it open, whether there was a change in the sun's apparent and earth's real motion, a general change by unusual refraction, or one local only. But the last seems more likely for several reasons. First, the special mention that it was "in the sun-dial of Ahaz." Next, the envoys from Babylon had heard of it as a local sign (2 Chron. 32:31). It could not, then, have extended to Babylon. *Birks.*

Some suppose that the phenomenon might have been produced by the simple refraction of the rays, through the sudden interposition of a different medium. That such refraction takes place when rays of light pass through a denser medium is a well-known physical fact. The most striking illustration is perhaps found in the observation made, on March 27th, 1708, by P. Romauld, prior of the cloister of

Metz, that, owing to such refraction in the higher regions of the atmosphere, in connection with the appearance of a cloud, the shadow of his dial deviated an hour and a half. However produced, the retrogression of the shadow upon the dial of Ahaz was certainly of a miraculous nature. *Kitto.*

The shiftings of shadows on the dial that Isaiah predicted to sick Hezekiah are liable to occur at any place, when these two circumstances concur: (1) That the upper atmosphere is in that condition which causes two bright parhelia or mock suns to appear on opposite sides of the sun; and (2) that the lower air contains drifting clouds, massive enough to hide often two of the three. When the real sun and eastern mock sun are hidden, there is only the western to cast shadows, which then coincide with what the sun will cast an hour and a half later; but if the clouds shift so as to hide the west parhelion, and disclose the eastern, the shadows instantly become such as the sun cast an hour and a half earlier. The parhelia being always caused by rays refracted through two faces of equilateral triangular prisms or fibres of ice, their angular distance from the sun is always the minimum deviation that such a prism of ice produces on the brightest or yellow rays, which is very near a fourth of a right angle; so that if Hezekiah's diallers divided the quadrant into forty, than which no number is more likely, considering how constantly it recurs in the Hebrew laws and history (oftener, indeed, than any other above ten), the advance or recession of the shadow would have to be ten of these parts. On March 29th, 1848, these effects occurred, had any one been looking, on every dial in the Isle of Portsea, and very probably of much of Hampshire besides. The parhelia were present and bright enough at about 11 P.M., and still better between 1 P.M. and 1.30 P.M. (not between 11 P.M. and 1 P.M., because, though the atmospheric conditions were right, the sun had risen above the required limits of altitude), and the drifting clouds below were present. Considering how much steeper is the sun's daily path in the latitude of Jerusalem than in England, it seems more likely that the pair of parhelia were of the rarer kind, over and under the sun, which I certainly have seen described (or possibly even oblique), than the commoner ones that I saw, and Descartes, Halley, Folkes, and the other Royal Society observers. From the account in Isaiah, speaking of bringing back the sun, but the fuller one in Kings of only bringing back the shadow, I gather the Book of Kings to be the earlier docu-

ment, and more likely, in this place, to preserve that prophet's own words. *E. L. Garbett, Letter to R. A. Proctor, 1888.*

*Hezekiah's Psalm of Gratitude.*

**Isa. 38 : 10-20.** This psalm or ode written by Hezekiah is a sort of memorial record of his thoughts and emotions during those solemn days when the Lord brought him so near the gates of death. It may have been written in part for his own personal benefit ; in part to cherish the social sympathy of his friends and people. We may suppose it to have been sung or chanted in social worship. The original might as well be read, " When he was sick and was recovering from his sickness"—*i.e.*, during the process of recovery, while his experiences were yet fresh in his mind. H. C.—That Hezekiah should compose a psalm is not more strange than that he should make a collection of proverbs (Prov. 25 : 1). It would have been far more strange if one so much like David in character and spirit had not followed his example in the practice of devotional composition. The inspiration and canonical authority of this production are clear from its having been incorporated by Isaiah in his prophecies, although omitted in the Second Book of Kings. The questions raised by some interpreters, as to its antiquity and genuineness, are founded on the mere possibility that the passage may be of later date and by another writer. So far as we have evidence, either external or internal, there is not the slightest ground for critical misgiving. There is nothing in the psalm itself at all inconsistent with the supposition that it was conceived, and perhaps composed, if not reduced to writing, before the complete fulfilment of the promise in the king's recovery. A.

**11.** The sacred name JAH, here repeated with emphasis, is full of meaning. It is a simpler form of Jehovah, meaning simply, HE IS, or, I AM. Its repetition is meant to place in full relief the relation between the living God and living men. Hence it seems best to translate it in its second occurrence. The last word some render "the under-world"—*i.e.*, the state of the departed. But the structure and parallelism confirm the received version. The afflicted king made a double complaint ; that he would be cut off from the presence of the living God, who had placed his name in His Temple among living men ; and also that he would be shut out from the society of all that dwell upon earth. The word "no longer" implies that these things for the present would

cease, but neither excludes continued being in Hades, nor the sure hope of a resurrection. Birks.

**12.** *My dwelling is plucked up and uncovered by me (or away from me) like a shepherd's tent. I have rolled up, like the weaver, my life ; from the thrum he will cut me off ; from day to night thou wilt finish me.* The same thing is here represented by two figures. The first is that of a tent, the stakes of which are pulled up, and the covering removed, with a view to departure. The second figure is that of a web completed and removed by the weaver from the loom.

**13.** *What shall I say?—i.e.*, how shall I express my gratitude and wonder? *He hath said and done it,* He has promised and performed, perhaps with an implication that the promise was no sooner given than fulfilled. The recollection of this signal mercy he is resolved to cherish *all his years—i.e.*, throughout his life, by *going softly*, solemnly or slowly, *on account of the bitterness of his soul—i.e.*, in recollection of his sufferings. A.

**14.** Sickness, sorrow or suffering of any kind, when sanctified, has this softening effect. In remembrance of what we have felt and learned, we want to go softly, tenderly, gently. He who has been shaken by the hand of God, either physically or morally, must have learned a larger, tenderer charity for the weaknesses of others, for their doubts and wanderings. Sickness almost always brings something of this softening effect into the heart and life for a time. It chastens and subdues the angles and roughness of character. Sanctified sickness will produce softness of spirit before God. Our thoughts of Him will be more loving, more grateful, more personal. We shall think of Him not as the great Ruler, the general Benefactor, but as the Friend, my Healer, the One who has lifted me up from the gates of death. My voice as I utter His name will be tremulous with feeling, and soft with intensity and tenderness of love. S. S. T.

**15.** "O Lord, by these things"—Thy promised and performed mercies—such blessings as Thou hast kindly granted to me, "do men live;" human life is full of such manifested goodness from God : "And in reference to all these things my spirit lives," or, "there is life to my spirit." In the last clause, the word "so" should rather be *and*. "And Thou wilt still restore and save me"—*i.e.*, through the years of life that yet remain for me.

**16.** Probably his thought is of the change from the great bitterness of his sickness to the

peace that succeeded, which peace is in the last clause expanded and referred to God's love toward him, as if God's love became itself the power that lifted him up from the pit. God had freely forgiven all his sins, and therefore had heard his prayer for recovery. This is forcibly expressed in the phrase "cast them all behind thy back." The Hebrew conception of pardon is usually that of *covering* one's sins; hiding them from view; seeing and remembering them no more. H. C.

**18.** *For the grave shall not confess Thee (nor) death praise Thee; they that go down to the pit shall not hope for Thy truth.* Here, as often in the Psalms, the loss of the opportunity of praising God is urged as a reason, not only why he should be loath to die, but why God should preserve him (see Ps. 6 : 6 ; 88 : 11, 12). It does not follow from these words either that Hezekiah had no expectation of a future state or that the soul remains unconscious till the resurrection. The true explanation of the words is given by Calvin—viz., that the language is that of extreme agitation and distress, in which the prospect of the future is absorbed in contemplation of the present, and also that so far as he does think of futurity, it is upon the supposition of God's wrath. Regarding death, in this case, as a proof of the Divine displeasure, he cannot but look upon it as the termination of his solemn praises. The *truth* mentioned in the last clause is the truth of God's promises, to hope for which is to expect the promised blessing.

**19.** *The living, the living, he shall thank Thee like me (or as I do) to-day; father to sons shall make known, with respect to Thy truth—i. e., the truth of Thy promises, as in the verse preceding.* Only the living could praise God in that way to which the writer was accustomed, and on which his eye is here fixed, with special reference, no doubt, to the external service of the Temple. The last clause must be taken in a general sense, as Hezekiah was himself still childless. A.—His language here is accounted for by supposing that his mind is absorbed with the interest and the blessedness of praising God in His earthly Temple, and of testifying before all his people to the great things God had wrought for him. These modes of recognizing and praising God's goodness and of bearing his joyful testimony for God before the wide world, he appreciates deeply, hence he says: I cannot do this in the grave; if I had died in my sickness, I should have been cut off from this most precious privilege of witnessing for God here among His people. H. C.

How the believer watches the sun as its rising or declining measures the course of a Christian workday! How vast seems the task, and how short the time! What Divine opportunities, and we shall be here only once through all eternity to use them! What places meet for kindling up in them the lamp of true knowledge, and for shedding abroad through them the warmth of true love; they know us now, but presently they shall know us no more forever. We are working the work of Him that sent us while it is day, when we are demonstrating and illustrating and embodying the religion of this world's life, the integrity, mercy, diligence, purity, patience which belong to earth and man, following in the footsteps of our divinely human Master. We want to bring all our Christianity to bear upon this world while we are in it, that with the help of our Christianity we may make the best of the world, and make it the best, and win the blessing which is bound up with it. Because we believe that there is a God, and an immortality for God's children, an infinite justice and an infinite love; because these great disclosures have been made to us now, in the time of our mortal life; because our Lord was found in fashion as a man, and had a man's work to do, we see that there can be no better thing for us now, nothing which should more engage us now, than to be on earth, striving to fashion it according to heavenly patterns, to advance the ever-deepening purpose of good which runs through its ages, to nurse into vigor and beauty and fragrance and fruitfulness the trees of the Lord which spring from what seems mire and rubbish. It is good to be here, trying again and again, though amid many discouragements and after repeated failures, to make this human life a grand, blessed and gracious thing. R. Ellis.

**2 Chron. 32 : 30.** The sign given him was fulfilled to Hezekiah's entire satisfaction, and his recovery was rapid and complete. In three days he was able to make his appearance in the Temple, and to sing this song of thanksgiving. In a short time he resumed the active duties of his station, bent upon utilizing to the utmost the fresh lease of life which had been granted him. It was probably now that many of those works were undertaken which kept his memory so long in good odor among the Jewish people, as the collection of Proverbs of Solomon hitherto not put upon record (Prov. 25 : 1), and the arrangement of the water supply of Jerusalem on a new system (2 Chron. 32 : 30 ; Isa. 22 : 9, 11). Research is still busy with these remark-

able constructions, the extent of which is only now beginning to be fairly estimated. Evidently a long term of years was requisite for the elaboration of so vast a scheme, involving the excavation in the solid rock of numerous shafts, tunnels and aqueducts. G. R.

Hezekiah was not only a religious, he was also a civil, restorer; and his name has been handed down even to the present day in connection with the ingenious system of the ancient water supply of Jerusalem, the remains and fragments of which still may be traced, and are noble engineering works, worthy of good King Hezekiah. In the highest part of Mt. Zion is a large tank, still full of water, surrounded by houses, and still bearing the name of the "Pool of Hezekiah." It is fed by the drainage from the upper valley of Gihon, conveyed by a subterranean, and as yet unexplored, channel, at some depth underneath the city walls. There is no absolute proof that this great tank is the work of Hezekiah; but when we remember how, both in Chronicles and in Isaiah, the arrangement of watercourses is mentioned as Hezekiah's work, there is every reasonable probability that the traditional name embodies a historical fact. We are told (2 Chron. 32:30) that "Hezekiah stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David." Still we can see on the west side of Mt. Zion, outside the walls, the two pools, the upper and lower, of Gihon, with the broken embankment, which once intercepted the water and drained it into the upper pool. All the surface channels have long since been broken and destroyed, but the underground work of Hezekiah still remains to fill the pool which continues to bear his name. There is also a very recent discovery which may throw light on the works of "the good king." Down the valley of the Kedron, below the southeast corner of Mt. Moriah, crowned by Solomon's Temple, there is a long underground tunnel, pierced through the rock, which conveys the water of what is called the Virgin's Fountain to the Pool of Siloam. It is only in our own day that this tunnel, through which there is a perpetually flowing stream, has been explored. In the year 1881 a long inscription, without name or date, was discovered about the middle of this tunnel, recording the fact of the meeting of the workmen who were excavating from the one end with those who were working from the other. Though without name or date, as we have said, this inscription, from the shape of the letters, has been decided, by archæolo-

gists, aided by the style of the characters of the Moabite Stone, to belong to the period of Ahaz or Hezekiah. Whatever be the exact date, it is one of the only two known inscriptions of the period of the Jewish monarchy, and throws much light on the civilization and engineering knowledge of that age, illustrating the minute accuracy of the scriptural record. *Tristram*.

**Isa. 38:21, 22.** The last two verses of this chapter in Isaiah are evidently out of their chronological order. The obvious and simple supposition is that the passage before us is the first draught or original form of Isaiah's narrative, in which the facts recorded in these two least verses were added by a kind of afterthought, and that in rewriting the account, as a part of the national history, he naturally placed them in their chronological order. It would probably be easy to produce many parallel cases from the correspondence of voluminous letter-writers, or from other cases of repeated composition on the same subject by the same writer. However this may be, it seems clear that the explanation now proposed is simpler in itself, and requires less to be imagined or supposed than any other, and is therefore, even on the strictest principles of criticism, entitled to the preference. A.

#### THE EMBASSY OF MERODACH-BALADAN.

2 *Kings* 20:12-19; *Isa.* 39:1-8; 2 *Chron.* 32:31.

Soon after his recovery, Hezekiah received an embassy from a new quarter. Hitherto Babylon and Judea had been isolated from one another, and had perhaps scarcely known of each other's existence. Assyria had stood between them, and Babylonia had been for the most part an Assyrian dependency. But recently Babylonia had asserted herself. In B.C. 722, on the death of Shalmaneser, a native Chaldean named Merodach-baladan had made himself king of the country, and maintained his independence against all the efforts of Sargon to reduce him. His position, however, was precarious, and it was probably in the hope of concluding an alliance with Hezekiah—also an enemy of Sargon's (see the comment on verse 6)—that he sent his embassy. He had two excuses for it. A neighboring king might well congratulate his brother monarch on his recovery; and a Chaldean prince might well inquire into an astronomical marvel (2 Chron. 33:31). The date of the embassy appears to have been B.C. 712, the year following on Hezekiah's illness. *Hammond*.

**Isa. 39: 1, 2.** "At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah; for he had heard that he had been sick, *and was recovered.* And Hezekiah *was glad of them,* and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold." (The words in italics are additional to the text of 2 K. 20: 12, 13). The author of Chronicles, without relating the circumstance, makes a short comment upon it. After describing the riches, honor and prosperity of Hezekiah, he adds: "Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chron. 32: 31).

The reign of a Babylonian monarch, called Merodach-baladan, at about the period indicated—the latter part of the eighth century B.C.—is recorded in the famous "Canon of Ptolemy," which assigns him the years between B.C. 722 and B.C. 710. That the same monarch, after being deprived of his throne, was restored to it, and had a second reign of six months' duration, is related by Alexander Polyhistor, the friend of Sulla. This latter reign appears to have belonged to the year B.C. 703. So much is known to us from the classical writers. From the Assyrian monuments we learn that the relations between Babylonia and Assyria, during the reign of Merodach-baladan, were hostile. Sargon relates that he attacked this king, whom he viewed as a rebel, in his first year, defeated his ally, the king of Elam, and ravaged his territory, but without coming into contact with the Babylonian monarch himself. After this, troubles elsewhere forced him to leave Merodach-baladan in peace for eleven years; but in his twelfth year he again invaded Babylonia, took Babylon, and made Merodach-baladan a prisoner. Five years after this, as we learn from Sennacherib's annals, on the death of Sargon, Babylonia revolted. Merodach-baladan, escaping from the custody in which he was held, hastened to Babylon, and re-established his authority over the whole southern kingdom. But Sennacherib at once marched against him, defeated his forces, recovered Babylon, and drove him to take refuge in the marshes of Southern Chaldea; whence, after a short time, he fled across the Persian Gulf to Southern Elam, where he died in exile. The embassy of Merodach-baladan to Hezekiah falls, by Archbishop Usher's chronology, which is here founded upon Ptolemy's Canon, into the year B.C. 718. It would thus have taken place

between Sargon's first and second attack, very shortly before the latter. The monuments do not mention it; but they show that at this time Merodach-baladan was expecting the Assyrians to invade his country, was looking out for allies, and doing his best to strengthen his position. Under these circumstances it would be natural that he should seek the alliance of Hezekiah, who, at the opposite end of the Assyrian dominions, had "rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not" (2 K. 18: 7). That he should cloak his design under the double pretext that his object was to congratulate the Jewish king on his recovery from a dangerous illness (Isa. 39: 1), and to inquire concerning the astronomical "wonder done in the land" (2 Chron. 32: 31), is intrinsically probable, being consonant with diplomatic practice both in the East and in the West. An astronomical marvel, such as that of the going back of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz (2 K. 20: 11; Isa. 38: 8), would naturally attract attention in Babylonia, where the phenomena of the heavens were observed with the utmost diligence from a very remote period. G. R.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign (B.C. 711), accordingly, ambassadors came from the court of Babylon, under the pretext of congratulating the Jewish king on his recovery from sickness. Their real object, however, was to concert measures with Hezekiah for a general uprising in the West, and for the formation of a league against Sargon, which should embrace at once Babylonia, Palestine and Elam. Hezekiah was flattered by such a proof of his own importance. He opened the gates of his armory and treasure-house, and showed the ambassadors the accumulated stores of wealth and arms which he was ready to lavish on the war. *Sayce.*

**3-8.** It was a disingenuous device when Hezekiah, in answer to the questioning of Isaiah, sought to divert him by a reference to the "far country" whence the ambassadors had come, as if flattering to Jewish national pride, and implying the acknowledged supremacy of Jehovah's power. Such had not been the object of the prophet in asking about the country of these strangers. By eliciting that they had come from Babylon, he would indicate to Hezekiah that his inmost purpose in showing them all his treasures had been read. But to know it was to pronounce the Divine disapprobation of any such alliance against Assyria. This explains the severity of the punishment afterward denounced upon Hezekiah for an offence which otherwise might have seemed trivial.

But this had clearly appeared, that Hezekiah had not learned the lessons which his late danger and God-granted recovery were intended to teach; nor did he learn them otherwise than in the school of extreme anguish, after all his worldly policy had ended in defeat, his land been desolated, and the victorious host of Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem. And this seems to be the meaning of the reference in 2 Chron. 32:25, 26, to the ungratefulness and the pride of the king after his miraculous recovery, as well as of this other notice (verse 31), that in the matter of the ambassadors, God had left Hezekiah to himself, to try him, and "know all that was in his heart." But with God there was not any changeableness. As afterward Isalah denounced the alliance with Egypt, so now he spoke the Divine judgment on the hoped-for treaty with Babylon. So far from help being derived from such alliance, Israel's future doom and misery would come from Babylon, and the folly of Hezekiah would alike appear and be punished in the exile and servitude of his descendants. Thus in the sequence of God this sowing of disobedience should be followed by a harvest of judgment. Yet for the present would there be "peace and continuance"—till the measure of iniquity was filled. And Hezekiah acquiesced in the sentence, owning its justice and grateful for its delay. Yet here also we perceive shortcoming. Hezekiah did not reach up to the high level of his father David in circumstances somewhat similar (2 Sam. 24:17), nor was his even the humble absolute submission of Eli of old (1 Sam. 3:18). But as throughout this history Isaiah appeared as the true prophet of God by the consistency of his utterance of the Divine Will against all heathen alliances, by His resistance to all worldly policy, so did he now rise to the full height of his office. Never before had there been so unmistakable a prediction of the future as when Isaiah in the full height of Assyria's power announced that the world-empire of the future would not belong to it, but to vanquished Babylonia, and that Judah's judgment would not come from their present dreaded enemies, but from those who now had sought their alliance. A. E.

**3, 4.** It is noticeable that Hezekiah did not at first answer both the questions put by Isaiah. But the prophet had his mission from God and knew where to place his finger to touch the sin of his king and friend. This must have been to him a heavy message, borne with a sad heart, yet a heart true and faithful to his God. No hint is dropped as to his emo-

tions however; we only know that he did not shrink in any wise from this painful duty. H. C.

It was not for a mere yielding to vanity that Isaiah so severely rebuked him. His offence was of a graver kind. The ambassadors had come with proposals for an alliance, and in hearkening to them on this subject Hezekiah had really been unfaithful to his position as a theocratic king. He was departing from the example set him by David. As king of the holy nation, it was his duty to keep himself free from entangling worldly alliances, to make God his boast, to rely on Him for defence and help, and to resist solicitations to worldly pride and vanity. From this ideal he had fallen. In displaying his treasures, he was practically placing them before God, as the glory and defence of his kingdom. In reciprocating the friendship of the foreigners, accepting their gifts, and encouraging their advances, he was taking a first step in that direction of forming worldly alliances, which afterward brought such trouble on the state. It was this policy, indeed, which ultimately led to the Captivity, as already a similar policy had wrought the ruin of Israel. The lessons for the Christian are obvious. "The friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4). It is his duty to avoid worldly display, to guard against being ruled by worldly motives and ambitions, and to avoid ensnaring worldly alliances. He who gives way to these things is laying the foundations of his own spiritual overthrow. J. O.

In his memorial song he had expressed a very earnest desire to live that he might praise God among the living and testify to all the world his gratitude to his gracious Benefactor; and yet when this admirable opportunity came providentially to his hand, his vanity swamped his piety, made him forget his solemn vow to walk softly before God all his days, and drove out of his mind (apparently) every thought of bearing a grateful testimony for the God of Israel before these heathen ambassadors. Alas for human frailty when God leaves a man to try him that He may know what is in his heart! This is the discriminating and philosophical explanation given by the author of 2 Chron. (32:25) of this sad dereliction in Christian duty. H. C.

**2 Chron. 32:31. God left him to try him.** God rules men on large principles, but proves them by specific tests. His law is great and equitable; the trial of obedience to it is sometimes quite minute. In the garden

within the land of Eden man and woman were put under a rule of universal obedience to the voice of the Lord, and they were tested by this specific requirement, to abstain from the fruit of one of the trees in the garden. Lot, his wife and daughters were rescued by angels from a doomed city, and enjoined to flee to the mountains; "but his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." Hezekiah, devoutly referring everything to God, had great deliverances and a prosperous reign; but failing to consult the Lord when a flattering embassy came to him from Babylon, he revealed vainglory lurking in his heart, and broke down the wall of defence which his previous piety had reared round his throne. D. F.—When Sennacherib threatens, when his messengers blaspheme, the Jewish monarch remains firm; his faith is unshaken; he casts his care upon God, looks to Him and Him only; believes in Him, trusts in Him, regards prayer as the only door of safety. Similarly, when disease prostrates him, and the prophet is commissioned to bid him "set his house in order; for he shall die, and not live," his faith fails not, in God is still his refuge, to God alone he betakes himself, and prays and weeps sore. But the danger past, health restored, the admiration of foreign kings attracted, his ear besieged by congratulations and flatteries, his court visited by envoys from "a far country," and at once his grasp relaxes, the thought of God fades from his heart, his faith slips from him, and he is a mere worldling, bent on winning to himself a great alliance, and obtaining the aid of an "arm of flesh" against his enemies. And so it is and will ever be with most of us. We can bear the buffets of fortune, resist them, defy them, and still maintain our integrity; but let the world smile, let fortune favor us, let riches increase, let friends spring up on all sides, and how few of us can stand the sunshine! *Hammond.*

The Scripture history faithfully exhibits the temptations that have charms for us all, and the failures of God's most favored children. The whole Bible breathes the same tone of noble frankness. One is constantly reminded of God, who "cannot lie." Not a lurking passion is suffered to remain undetected in its living pictures. Motives which we should be ashamed to avow are dragged before our conscience in the history of another; and while his sentence is passed we feel a personal condemnation. This is, indeed, the true and highest use of history: to speak to the heart through the understanding; to make every character

that is brought before us promote the formation and consolidation of our own. *Encyc. Metrop.*

**Isa. 39:5-7.** This prophecy, delivered while yet Babylon was scarcely an independent power, received (a full hundred years later) a very specific fulfilment. This message must be dated about B.C. 713. The first considerable deportation of captives occurred B.C. 606; the last B.C. 588. H. C.—To those who are under no unhappy necessity of explaining away the clearest proofs of inspiration and prophetic foresight, this passage affords a striking instance of the gradual development of prophecy. The general threatening of expatriation had been uttered seven hundred years before by Moses (Lev. 26:33; De. 28:64-67; 30:3). Five hundred years later, Ahijah had declared that Israel should be rooted up and scattered *beyond the river* (1 K. 14:15). Within a hundred years they had been threatened by Amos with *captivity beyond Damascus* (Amos 5:27). Isaiah himself had obscurely intimated a future connection between the fortunes of Israel and Babylon (chaps. 14:1; 21:10). But here, for the first time, the Babylonish exile is explicitly foretold, unless the similar prediction of the contemporary prophet Micah (4:10) be considered earlier. The fulfilment of the prophecy began in the deportation of Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:11), but was described as something still prospective by Jeremiah (20:5), in whose days, and the reign of Zedekiah, it was at length fully accomplished (2 Chron. 36:18). A.

**7.** Now he was told, that *of the sons which should issue from him, which he should beget, there would be captives taken, who would be carried to Babylon.* The curse of childlessness was therefore to be removed from him; his wife, Hephzibah—happily named (Isa 62:4)—was to bear him at least one son; his seed was to sit upon the throne of David; and the Messiah might be, as in fact He was, among his posterity. And within the space of a year or two the implied promise received fulfilment. Hephzibah brought forth her first-born, and it proved a "man child." No doubt the joy of the parents was great, and overshadowed by no provision of his future apostasy. They called their child Manasseh, implying, that now all their domestic troubles were forgotten (Gen. 41:51), and perhaps anticipating that the name might prove attractive to the remnant of the Israelites. G. R.

**8.** A feeling of relief and satisfaction that the evil is not to come in his day would be but natural, and though not according to the stand-



ard of Christian perfectness, would imply no very great defect of character in one who lived under the old dispensation. Moderns are too apt to regard the Old Testament saints as perfect, and to justify all they did or said, which the profoundest reverence for the old Scriptures and the truest sympathy with the saints does not require us to do. B. C.—But we can hardly see in this reply only a selfish egotism. Two feelings are plainly expressed, humble submission to the justice of God's sentence, and thankfulness for the merciful limitation. His sinful pride, of which he was now made conscious, was not suffered to reverse the earlier promise. His faith, prayers and zeal, in spite of his sin, had availed to turn back for his lifetime the deepening shadow on the dial-plate of the kingdom of Judah; and he saw in this suspense of coming judgments, long deserved by the nation, a clear token of the goodness of the Lord. He owned the goodness of the Lord in a threatening which might have seemed severe; and there follows presently (Isa. 40) a glorious series of fuller promises than ever before, with their gracious preface—"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." *Birks.*

"I have deserved a present payment; O God, Thou deferrest it: I have deserved war and tumult; Thou favorest me with peace: I have deserved to be overrun with superstition

and idolatry; Thou blestest me with truth: shouldst Thou continue truth unto me though upon the most unquiet terms, the blessing were too good for me; but now Thou hast promised, and wilt not reverse it, that both truth and peace shall be in my days: Lord, I adore Thy justice, I bless Thy mercy." God's children are neither waspish nor sullen when they are chid or beaten; but patiently hold their backs to the stripes of a displeased mercy; knowing how much more God is to be magnified for what He might have done, than repined at for what He hath done; resigning themselves over into the hand of that gracious justice which in their smart seeks their reformation and glory. *Bp. H.*

Viewed in whole his character is not unblemished, yet is in the main that of a man of prayer and of both favor and power with God, whose reign bore a glorious testimony to Jehovah's presence with His people, and to the might of His arm for their salvation. The impulses of those memorable scenes live and are borne down through all time in the sublime faith and the glorious visions of Isaiah the prophet. His eye saw them; his soul felt their utmost thrilling power. The spirit of prophecy availed itself of those present manifestations of God to exalt his conceptions of the glorious future of the real Zion—the city and kingdom of the Great God. *H. C.*

## Section 41.

### REIGN OF HEZEKIAH (*Concluded*).

#### SENNACHERIB'S ARMY DESTROYED. DEATH OF HEZEKIAH.

2 **KINGS** 18 : 18-37 ; 19 : 1-37 ; 20 : 20, 21 ; **ISAIAH** 36, 37 (IDENTICAL WITH **KINGS**).

18 : 13 Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of 14 Judah, and took them. And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver; and thirty talents 15 of gold. And Hezekiah gave *him* all the silver that was found in the house of the

2 **CHRONICLES** 32 : 1-23, 32, 33.

1 **AFTER** these things, and this faithfulness, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for 2 himself. And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was 3 purposed to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city; and they helped 4 him. So there was gathered much people together, and they stopped all the fountains, and the brook that flowed through the midst

LORD, and in the treasures of the king's  
 16 house. At that time did Hezekiah cut off  
*the gold from* the doors of the temple of the  
 LORD, and *from* the pillars which Hezekiah  
 king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to  
 the king of Assyria.

17 And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and  
 Rab-saris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to  
 king Hezekiah with a great army unto Je-  
 rusalem. And they went up and came to  
 Jerusalem. And when they were come up,  
 they came and stood by the conduit of the  
 upper pool, which is in the high way of the  
 18 fuller's field. And when they had called to  
 the king, there came out to them Eliakim  
 the son of Hilkiah, which was over the  
 household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah  
 19 the son of Asaph the recorder. And Rab-  
 shakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Heze-  
 kiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of  
 Assyria, What confidence is this wherein  
 20 thou trustest? Thou sayest, but they are  
 but vain words, *There is* counsel and  
 strength for the war. Now on whom dost  
 thou trust, that thou hast rebelled against  
 21 me? Now, behold, thou trustest upon the  
 staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt;  
 whereon if a man lean, it will go into his  
 hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of  
 22 Egypt unto all that trust on him. But if  
 ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our  
 God: is not that he, whose high places and  
 whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and  
 hath said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye  
 shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?  
 23 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to  
 my master the king of Assyria, and I will  
 give thee two thousand horses, if thou be  
 able on thy part to set riders upon them.  
 24 How then canst thou turn away the face of  
 one captain of the least of my master's ser-  
 vants, and put thy trust on Egypt for  
 25 chariots and for horsemen? Am I now come  
 up without the LORD against this place to  
 destroy it? The LORD said unto me, Go  
 26 up against this land, and destroy it. Then  
 said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Sheb-  
 nah, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I  
 pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian  
 language; for we understand it: and speak  
 not with us in the Jews' language, in the  
 27 ears of the people that are on the wall. But  
 Rabshakeh said unto them, Hath my mas-  
 ter sent me to thy master, and to thee, to  
 speak these words? *hath he* not sent me to  
 the men which sit on the wall, to eat their  
 own dung, and to drink their own water

of the land, saying, Why should the kings  
 of Assyria come, and find much water?  
 5 And he took courage, and built up all the  
 wall that was broken down, and raised *it* up  
 to the towers, and the other wall without,  
 and strengthened Millo *in* the city of David,  
 and made weapons and shields in abundance.

6 And he set captains of war over the people,  
 and gathered them together to him in the  
 broad place at the gate of the city, and spake  
 7 comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and  
 of a good courage, be not afraid nor dismayed  
 for the king of Assyria, nor for all the mul-  
 8 titude that is with him: for there is a greater  
 with us than with him: with him is an arm  
 of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to  
 help us, and to fight our battles. And the  
 people rested themselves upon the words of  
 Hezekiah king of Judah.

9 After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria  
 send his servants to Jerusalem, (now he was  
 before Lachish, and all his power with him,)   
 unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto  
 all Judah, that were at Jerusalem, saying,  
 10 Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria,  
 Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide the siege  
 11 in Jerusalem? Doth not Hezekiah per-  
 suade you, to give you over to die by fam-  
 ine and by thirst, saying, The LORD our God  
 shall deliver us out of the hand of the king  
 12 of Assyria? Hath not the same Hezekiah  
 taken away his high places and his altars,  
 and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, say-  
 ing, Ye shall worship before one altar, and  
 13 upon it shall ye burn incense? Know ye  
 not what I and my fathers have done unto  
 all the peoples of the lands? Were the gods  
 of the nations of the lands any ways able to  
 14 deliver their land out of mine hand? Who  
 was there among all the gods of those na-  
 tions which my fathers utterly destroyed,  
 that could deliver his people out of mine  
 hand, that your God should be able to deliver  
 15 you out of mine hand? Now therefore let  
 not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you  
 on this manner, neither believe ye him: for  
 no god of any nation or kingdom was able  
 to deliver his people out of mine hand, and  
 out of the hand of my fathers: how much  
 less shall your God deliver you out of mine  
 16 hand? And his servants spake yet more  
 against the LORD God, and against his servant  
 17 Hezekiah. He wrote also letters, to rail on  
 the LORD, the God of Israel, and to speak  
 against him, saying, As the gods of the na-  
 tions of the lands, which have not delivered  
 their people out of mine hand, so shall not

28 with you ? Then Rabshakeh stood, and  
cried with a loud voice in the Jews' lan-  
guage, and spake, saying, Hear ye the word  
29 of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus  
saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive  
you ; for he shall not be able to deliver you  
30 out of his hand : neither let Hezekiah make  
you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD  
will surely deliver us, and this city shall  
not be given into the hand of the king of  
31 Assyria. Harken not to Hezekiah : for  
thus saith the king of Assyria, Make your  
peace with me, and come out to me ; and eat  
ye every one of his vine, and every one of  
his fig tree, and drink ye every one the  
32 waters of his own cistern ; until I come and  
take you away to a land like your own land,  
a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and  
vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey,  
that ye may live, and not die : and hearken  
not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you,  
33 saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath  
any of the gods of the nations ever delivered  
his land out of the hand of the king of As-  
34 syria ? Where are the gods of Hamath,  
and of Arpad ? where are the gods of Sep-  
harvaim, of Hena, and Ivah ? have they  
35 delivered Samaria out of my hand ? Who  
are they among all the gods of the countries,  
that have delivered their country out of my  
hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusa-  
36 lem out of my hand ? But the people held  
their peace, and answered him not a word :  
for the king's commandment was, saying,  
37 Answer him not. Then came Eliakim,  
the son of Hilkiah, which was over the  
household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah  
the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah  
with their clothes rent, and told him the  
words of Rabshakeh.

**19 : 1** And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and  
2 covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. And he sent  
Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests,  
3 covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. And they said unto him,  
Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of contumely : for  
4 the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. It may be the  
LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master  
hath sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD thy God  
5 hath heard : wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left. So the servants of  
6 king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master,  
Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the ser-  
7 vants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he  
shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land ; and I will cause him to fall by the  
sword in his own land.

8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah : for he  
9 had heard that he was departed from Lachish. And when he heard say of Tirhakah king  
of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee : he sent messengers again unto

the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out  
18 of mine hand. And they cried with a loud  
voice in the Jews' language unto the people  
of Jerusalem that were on the wall, to  
affright them, and to trouble them ; that  
19 they might take the city. And they spake  
of the God of Jerusalem, as of the gods of  
the peoples of the earth, which are the work  
20 of men's hands. And Hezekiah the king, and  
Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz, prayed  
21 because of this, and cried to heaven. And  
the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the  
mighty men of valour, and the leaders and  
captains, in the camp of the king of Assyria.  
So he returned with shame of face to his own  
land. And when he was come into the house  
of his god, they that came forth of his  
own bowels slew him there with the sword.  
22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the in-  
habitants of Jerusalem from the hand of  
Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from  
the hand of all other, and guided them on  
23 every side. And many brought gifts unto  
the LORD in Jerusalem, and precious things  
to Hezekiah king of Judah : so that he was  
exalted in the sight of all nations from  
thenceforth.

2 CHRONICLES 32 : 32, 33.

32 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and  
his good deeds, behold, they are written in  
the vision of Isaiah the prophet the son of  
Amoz, in the book of the kings of Judah and  
33 Israel. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers,  
and they buried him in the ascent of the  
sepulchres of the sons of David : and all  
Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem  
did him honour at his death. And Manasseh  
his son reigned in his stead.

10 Hezekiah, saying, Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the 11 king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, 12 by destroying them utterly : and shalt thou be delivered ? Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the 13 children of Eden which were in Telassar ? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of 14 Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah ? And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it : and Hezekiah went up unto 15 the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD, [of hosts,] the God of Israel, that sittest upon the cherubim, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth ; thou hast made heaven and earth. 16 Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear ; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see, and hear the words 17 of Sennacherib, wherewith he hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods 18 into the fire : for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone ; there- 19 fore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O LORD our God, save thou us, I beseech thee, out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard 21 thee. This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him : The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee and laughed thee to scorn ; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken 22 her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed ? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high ? *even* against the Holy One of 23 Israel. By thy messengers thou hast reproached the LORD, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the innermost parts of Leba- non ; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir trees thereof : and I will 24 enter into his farthest lodging place, the forest of his fruitful field. I have digged and drunk 25 strange waters, and with the sole of my feet will I dry up all the rivers of Egypt. Hast thou not heard how I have done it long ago, and formed it of ancient times ? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps. 26 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded ; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as 27 corn blasted before it be grown up. But I know thy sitting down, and thy going out, and 28 thy coming in, and thy raging against me. Because of thy raging against me, and for that thine arrogancy is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and 29 my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. And this shall be the sign unto thee : ye shall eat this year that which groweth of itself, and in the second year that which springeth of the same ; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and 30 plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of 31 Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of mount Zion they that shall escape : the zeal of the LORD shall 32 perform this. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor 33 cast a mount against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and he shall 34 not come unto this city, saith the LORD. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

35 And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand : and when men arose early 36 in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria de- 37 parted, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword : and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

2 KINGS 20 : 20, 21.

20 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of

21 the kings of Judah? And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

ORIGIN AND AUTHORSHIP OF 2 KINGS 18 AND 19,  
AND ISAIAH 36 AND 37.

THE simple, common-sense view of the matter is, that since the traditional position of these chapters among the writings of Isaiah corresponds exactly to the known fact of his having written a part of the history of Judah, the presumption in favor of his having written both the passages in question cannot be shaken by the mere possibility, or even the intrinsic probability, of other hypotheses, for which there is not the least external evidence. The specific end for which the narrative is here appended to the foregoing prophecies appears to be that of showing the fulfilment of certain prophecies which had relation to a proximate futurity, and thereby gaining credence and authority for those which had a wider scope and a remoter consummation. A.

It is well known that Isaiah wrote portions of the historic records of his nation—*e.g.*, the life of Uzziah (2 Chron. 26 : 22) and of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 33 : 22). None can doubt that he wrote these historic chapters. Both the resemblances and the differences of these two narratives are easily accounted for upon this highly probable supposition. The narrative in 2 Chron. 32 differs very considerably from either of these, omitting much; condensing some of the points which it introduces, yet bringing out some new matter. It can scarcely be doubted that this account is of later date and purposely supplementary to the other two. There is abundant reason to conclude that the books of Chronicles were chiefly compiled by Ezra and his associates, the matter, whether original or selected, being adapted to certain moral purposes which were then of paramount importance to the recently restored exiles. H. C.

FIRST ASSYRIAN INVASION OF JUDAH.

2 Kings 18 : 18-16; 2 Chronicles 32 : 1-8;  
Isaiah 36 : 1.

**2 K. 18 : 13. "In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah."** This note of time, which places the invasion of Sennacherib eight years only after the capture of Samaria, is hopelessly at variance with the Assyrian dates for the two events, the first of which falls into the first of Sargon, and the second into the fourth of Sennacherib, twenty-one years later. We have therefore to choose between an entire

rejection of the Assyrian chronological data, preserved to our times in the original contemporary documents, and confirmed in numerous minute points by the Canon of Ptolemy, and an emendation of the present passage. The knot may be cut by a substitution of "seven and twentieth" for "fourteenth" in the present passage. B. C.—The evidence in support of this solution is clearly given in the following historical detail by Canon Rawlinson. B.

**13-16.** The Assyrian annals place the accession of Sennacherib in the seventeenth year after the capture of Samaria by Sargon, which was the twenty-third year of Hezekiah. He was the eldest son of Sargon, and succeeded his father, without interregnum or difficulty, in the summer of B.C. 705. He calls himself "the great king, the powerful king, the king of the Assyrians, of the nations, of the four regions, the diligent ruler, the favorite of the great gods, the observer of sworn faith, the guardian of law, the establisher of monuments, the noble hero, the strong warrior, the first of kings, the punisher of unbelievers, the destroyer of wicked men." He was mighty both in war and peace. No more energetic soldier ever commanded an army eager for battle; no more vigorous administrator ever commanded the resources of a vast empire. Sennacherib, on mounting the throne, found the condition of affairs in Babylonia more critical, and more requiring his immediate presence, than those of any other portion of his dominions. Merodach-Baladan, who had been driven from Babylon by Sargon, had returned thither as soon as Sargon was dead, and had succeeded in establishing himself as king for a second time. Sennacherib was engaged for some years in recovering Babylonia to the Assyrian Empire, and it was not till his fourth year, B.C. 701, that he was able to turn his attention to the western provinces, and set himself to the task of placing matters there on a satisfactory footing. He found that on all sides intrigues were afoot to organize a powerful combination against Assyrian influence in southwestern Asia. Phœnicia under Elulæus, king of Sidon, Judea under Hezekiah, Philistia under Zidqa, king of Ascalon, and Egypt under Tirhakah, who held his court at Meroe, were banded together, and bent on checking Assyrian progress by all the means in their power. But in most of the States there appear to have been divided counsels, two parties, one for submission, the

other for resistance; one leaning on Egypt, the other anxious to make the best terms possible with Assyria. Unwisdom and unreadiness, as was natural, showed themselves. No general union of the confederates took place. Sennacherib was allowed to fall upon his adversaries separately, and crush them one by one. In the spring of B.C. 701 he marched his troops into Syria, and directing his attack upon Phœnicia first of all, proceeded to take "Great Sidon, the lesser Sidon, Sarepta, Hosah, Ecdippa, Accho," and other towns, forcing Elulæus to flee before him, and establishing in his place another king. Thence he marched southward, along the coast, to Ascalon, taking Beth-Dagon, Joppa, Bene-berak, and Azor upon his way, and compelled Ascalon to submit, and receive another monarch instead of Zidqa. Tirhakah had by this time sent an army to assist his confederates. This force Sennacherib fell in with at Eltekon, and completely defeated, or (as he says) "accomplished its overthrow." He next reduced Ekron; and having thus carried all before him, and left Hezekiah without an ally, he, last of all, turned upon Judea. With an army of, probably, at least two hundred thousand men, he swept over the land, especially on the west and on the south, ravaging the territory, besieging and taking the fortified places, and gathering spoil and captives at every step. His own account of his invasion is the following: "Because Hezekiah, king of Judah, would not submit to my yoke, I came up against him, and by force of arms and by the might of my power I took forty-six of his strong-fenced cities; and of the smaller towns which were scattered about, with the marching of a host and surrounding of a multitude, with attack of ranks, and force of battering-rams, and mining and missiles, I besieged and captured a countless number. From these places I took and carried off 200,150 persons, old and young, male and female, together with horses and mules, asses and camels, oxen and sheep, a countless multitude. And Hezekiah himself I shut up in Jerusalem, his capital city, like a bird in a cage, building towers round the city to hem him in, and raising banks of earth against the gates, so as to prevent escape. Then upon this Hezekiah there fell the fear of the power of my arms, and he sent out to me the chiefs and the elders of Jerusalem, with thirty talents of gold, and eight hundred talents of silver, and divers treasures, a rich and immense booty. All these things were brought to me at Nineveh, the city of my dominion,

Hezekiah having sent them by way of tribute, and as a token of his submission to my power." The author of Kings compresses this history into verses 18-16. G. R.

The entire passage in Chron. 32:1-8 is almost wholly supplementary, being concerned with the preparations made by Hezekiah for resistance, whereas in 2 Kings we are informed only of what he did when, after a time, he determined to make his submission.

**2 Chron. 32:3-8.** Hezekiah had taken all the measures for his defence that circumstances permitted. He had "stopped the waters of the fountains which were without the city," concealing the sources and conducting the precious fluid to the reservoirs and conduits beneath the Holy City (Isa. 22:9, 11), thus at once improving his own supplies and straitening the enemy. He had "strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers," using as material the houses in the vicinity; and he had built "another wall without, and repaired Millo, and made darts and shields in abundance." He had also done his best to raise the spirits of the besieged by addressing them with words of encouragement.

**8. With us is the Lord our God.** The faith which these words express would, one might have thought, not have wavered. But—alas! for human infirmity—we learn, both from Kings (2 K. 18:14) and from the inscriptions of Sennacherib, that within a little while this noble confidence died away, and was succeeded by despair and submission. Like Rehoboam, like Joash, Hezekiah was content to purchase his safety. The narrative of Kings tells us at what price (2 K. 18:15, 16). Hezekiah stripped the temple and emptied his treasures to obtain what proved a mere temporary relief. B. C.

One of the most striking illustrations of Scripture, which the profane records of the world furnish, is that supplied by the earlier portion of the annals of Sennacherib in its bearing upon 2 K. 18:13-16; 2 Chron. 32:1-8; and Isa. 36:1. The agreement of these two narratives cannot but be admitted to be most striking. In both we have the same pair of adversaries, Tsin-akh-irib (Sankherib), king of Asshur, and Khizkiyahu, king of Judah; in both the Assyrian is the assailant; in both the first brunt of his attack falls upon the strong fenced cities of Judah, which are successively taken and plundered; in both he then proceeds against Jerusalem, where Hezekiah is for a time shut up, while the siege is pressed; in

both after awhile submission is made, an embassy is sent, tribute is agreed on, and consists of a certain definite amount of each of the precious metals, gold and silver; in both the amount of the gold is identical. G. R.

#### SECOND INVASION OF JUDAH BY SENNACHERIB.

2 Kings 18 : 17-37 ; 19 : 1-37. } Text almost  
Isaiah 36 : 2-22 ; 37 : 1-38. } identical.  
2 Chronicles 32 : 9-23.

The narrative includes the embassy of Rabshakeh and its effect in the message of Hezekiah to Isaiah, with Isaiah's brief response of encouragement; the letter of Sennacherib, with the prayer of Hezekiah and the response of Jehovah conveyed through Isaiah, announcing His purposed defence of Jerusalem; and the destruction of the Assyrian host and final departure and subsequent murder of Sennacherib. B.

#### RABSHAKEH'S INSULTING ADDRESS.

2 Kings 18 : 17-35 ; 2 Chronicles 32 : 9-16.

*The impious, proud demand of Sennacherib for the surrender of Jerusalem.* The Assyrian king while besieging the town of Lachish, distant forty miles southwest, sent three messengers, with a considerable force, to Jerusalem. In 2 K. 18 : 17, these persons are referred to under their official names: Tartan, or Commander; Rabсарis, the Court Chamberlain; and Rabshakeh, Chief Cup-bearer—the chief civil and military officers of the empire. Their mission was not a military one, but was designed to summon the king and the people to a complete surrender. The Assyrian officers were not admitted into the city, nor did the king himself go out to meet them. Instead of this he sent three of his chief officers, who, standing on the wall, received the message of the Assyrians. "The chief cup-bearer was the spokesman. He spoke in Hebrew. The Jewish chiefs entreated him to speak in his own Aramaic; but his purpose was directly to address the spectators as they sat on the houses along the city wall, and his speech breathes the spirit which pervades all the representations of Assyrian power" (*Stanley*). Egypt was the great enemy of Assyria, and had been for centuries. Assyria was the "north" kingdom, and Egypt the "south" of Daniel's prophecy. Judah was in alliance with Egypt. The first appeal of Rabshakeh referred to this alliance. His scornful question, "Whereon do ye trust?" had reference to the impotence of the Egyptian king to resist the inroad of Sennacherib. This

might be well enough. But the messenger undertook to counteract the persuasions of Hezekiah, wherein the king had sought to lead his people to trust alone in God. The messenger aimed to stir afresh their prejudices against the king, who had destroyed the high places and altars where the people had been accustomed to worship. Not only did he strive to undermine the faith of the people in their king, and in Jehovah, but he impiously exalted the idol gods above Jehovah; nay, further, he expressly boasted that the power of Jehovah was not adequate to deliver them from the hand of Sennacherib. He placed this boast upon the ground that the gods of other nations had not been able to deliver them from the Assyrian power. Thus he compared Jehovah with other gods, and assumed that the gods of Assyria were mightier than Jehovah. The three messengers also sought to terrify the people on the wall, so that they might open the gates of the city to the Assyrian forces. B.

Rarely, perhaps, was there an occasion on which faith in the unseen was put to severer test than in the conference between the leaders of the Assyrian army and the representatives of King Hezekiah. What gave special point to the message which the Rabshakeh addressed to the king of Judah was the deep sense of past inconsistency; that, as regarded the matter in hand, it had not always been with Judah as at present, and that in measure their present evil was the outcome of their wrong-doing. But there comes to us also for all time this precious lesson: that even where we have been utterly mistaken, if only we turn in repentance to our God, we may look for His help and deliverance in the new and better course on which we are entering, however we may have to suffer for past sin. For God remaineth faithful, however we may have erred and strayed from His ways. It was only too true, as the Rabshakeh said, that in rebelling against Assyria Hezekiah's confidence had been in Egypt; too true also, as even the experience of the past might have taught him, that this was to trust in "the staff of a bruised reed" (cf. Isa. 30 : 1-7). But in the second point which the Rabshakeh urged lay the weakness of his cause and the strength of Hezekiah's position. Addressing himself to Hezekiah's adherents, he argued from the heathen point of view that since Hezekiah had abolished all the altars on the heights, and confined public religious worship to that in the Temple, he had not only forfeited any claim upon Jehovah, whom he regarded as the Jewish national Deity, but provoked Him to judg-

ment. Accordingly, as, on the one hand, he had taunted Hezekiah with want of all means for resisting the power of his master, so, on the other hand, he now boldly claimed for the inroad of Assyria and its success not only the approbation of, but even a mandate from Jehovah. Alike politically and in its religious misrepresentations, the speech was well calculated to appeal to such a populace as that of Jerusalem. Hence the representatives of Hezekiah requested the Rabshakeh to communicate with them, not in "Jewish" (*i.e.*, in Hebrew), as he had done, but in "Aramean," which, although the commercial language of Syria and Palestine, would not be understood by the common people. The suggestion was haughtily rejected, and the Assyrian openly avowed that his object was not to negotiate with the king nor his representatives, but to produce a reaction among the besieged, whom he represented as reduced to the utmost straits. To them he now directly appealed. They were not to allow themselves to be deceived. Hezekiah would not be able to deliver them—*viz.*, by the aid of Egypt—nor yet was this other pretension well founded, that Jehovah would deliver them. Rather was it their wisdom to ignore the king and make a treaty of submission to Assyria, in virtue of which, instead of their present misery, they might continue to enjoy undisturbed possession of their land till they could be transported into districts equally fertile with their own. It was an argument calculated, indeed, to influence heathens, to whom the question was as to the comparative power of gods, to be decided by outward results. But the very essence of Hebrew conviction lay in this: that there was none other God than Jehovah. It is this which constitutes the victory over that which is seen, but on which the men of the world ever deceive themselves in their ignorance of the power of a faith which is based on personal experience. And thus what in their view would seem the strongest argument in their appeal to "common sense" is in reality its refutation. It was in this spirit that the people on the wall of Jerusalem obeyed the injunction of Hezekiah, and answered not a word to the Assyrian. A. E.

**2 K. 18: 18.** Eliakim was a man of high character. God terms him, by the mouth of Isaiah, "His servant" (*ibid.*, verse 20). He was to be "a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah" (*ibid.*, verse 21); and "a glorious throne to his father's house" (*ibid.*, verse 23). His deportment in the scene now described well befits his reputation.

**21.** The "tall reed of the Nile bulrush" fitly symbolized the land where it grew. Apparently strong and firm, it was quite unworthy of trust. Let a man lean upon it, and the rotten support instantly gave way, wounding the hand that stayed itself so insecurely. So it was with Egypt throughout the whole period of Jewish history. Hoshea leaned upon Sabaco, and in consequence lost his kingdom (2 K. 17: 4-6), without receiving the slightest help. Hezekiah obtained no real relief from Tirhakah. Nor did Apries strike a blow for Zedekiah. The true policy of Egypt would have been to support with all her power the gallant struggles of the little Syrian States. Her actual practice was to pretend friendship, to hold out hopes of support, and then to fail in time of need.

**27.** "Hath not my master sent me," Rabshakeh says, "to these men, whom I see stationed on the wall to defend the place and bear the last extremities of a prolonged siege—these men on whom its worst evils will fall, and who have therefore the greatest interest in avoiding it by a timely surrender?" He expresses the evils by a strong, coarse phrase, suited to the rude soldiery, and well calculated to rouse their feelings. The author of Chronicles (verse 11) has softened down the words to "dying by famine and thirst."

**33. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land?** This boast is natural. The Assyrians had had an uninterrupted career of success, and might well believe that their gods were more powerful than those of the nations with whom they had warred. Nor was there anything in the history of the Jews, so far as they knew it, to induce them to separate this people in their minds from others. They had utterly overrun and destroyed the kindred tribes of Galilee, Gilead, and Samaria. They had for years exercised lordship over Judea; and, on the recent occasion of a rebellion, they had easily enforced submission, and the very king who now defied them had purchased his safety by the payment of a heavy fine. It is not surprising that they did not understand that their successes hitherto had been allowed by the very God, Jehovah, against whom they were now boasting themselves. (Cf. Isa. 10: 5-19.) B. C.

RESULT OF RABSHAKEH'S BLASPHEMOUS APPEAL.

2 Kings 18: 36, 37; 19: 1-7.

The populace were neither terrified by the threats nor seduced by the promises of Rab-



shakeh, but silently held to their allegiance to Hezekiah. And the king, when he heard from Eliakim what had transpired without, went submissively into the Lord's house. From thence he sent a message to Isaiah entreating the prophet's intercession in behalf of the people in their great peril. The instant response of Isaiah conveyed the Divine assurance that Jehovah Himself would interpose for the complete deliverance of king and people by enforcing the return of Sennacherib to his own land. The "rumor that he should heal" was realized in the statement of chap. 19: 9. B.

**19: 2. Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz.** Isaiah is here for the first time introduced into the history. His own writings show us how active a part he had taken in it for many years previously. This was the fourth reign since he began his prophesying, and during two reigns at least—those of Ahaz and Hezekiah—he had been a familiar counsellor of the monarch. But the necessary brevity of the narrative in Kings has prevented his appearing before. G. R.—That next after God, the king thought of Isaiah and turned to him for sympathy, counsel and prayer, puts the mutual relations of the king and the prophet in a very interesting light. Plainly the prophet enjoyed the full confidence of the king, and was held in the highest esteem before all the people. They knew and honored him as the messenger of God to the throne and to the nation. There can be no doubt that Isaiah had borne a leading part in the great reformation upon which Hezekiah entered when he came to the throne. Hence naturally all eyes were turned to him in this emergency, in which the question came so suddenly to a practical issue whether the God they had sought to serve would indeed protect them and pluck their city and kingdom from the open jaws of ruin. H. C.

There was a strong party in favor of an alliance with Egypt, the help of which they seem to have sought only to be repulsed with contempt. Isaiah vehemently denounces this party, and lays down the law—"Their strength is to sit still;" "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength"—in a series of his most magnificent prophecies, describing the destruction of the Assyrian by supernatural means when he should encamp against Ariel (*Lion of God*), the city of David, the establishment of Messiah's kingdom, and the privileges of his people. These chapters (29-35) stand in the Book of Isaiah immediately before the history of Sennacherib's invasion, for which they were evidently designed to prepare the minds of king

and people. The king proved worthy of such a prophet. Though he may have tampered with Egypt—a point on which we have no certain knowledge—and though he was driven to one act of disgraceful submission, his faith revived in the supreme crisis. Encouraged by Isaiah, he committed his own and his people's safety to Jehovah, who wrought for them a deliverance as signal as the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. P. S.

THE SECOND SUMMONS TO SURRENDER CONVEYED IN A LETTER FROM SENNACHERIB TO HEZEKIAH.

2 Kings 19: 8-13; 2 Chronicles 32: 17.

**2 K. 19: 8-13.** The Rabshakeh returned from his bootless expedition to his master, leaving, as we suppose, his army before Jerusalem. He found Sennacherib not at Lachish, but at Libnah, to which he had retreated probably on hearing of the advance of Tirhakah, the king of Ethiopia. As we have seen, Sennacherib gained indeed the victory of Altaku. But it was a virtual defeat, which, with the failure to gain possession of Jerusalem, determined the final retreat of Sennacherib from Palestine. His circumstances must have made him most anxious to obtain the surrender of the Judean capital. Accordingly, a second summons was despatched to demand it—probably before the battle of Altaku, although after the approach of the Ethiopian army. This second summons was embodied in a letter addressed to Hezekiah, and was in terms similar to those previously used, although it naturally contained no longer any reference to Egypt, and was also perhaps more directly challenging to the God of Israel. A. E.

Sennacherib seems to have been induced to write to Hezekiah by the fact that he could not march against him at once. A forward movement on the part of Tirhakah was reported to him (verse 9), and he thought it necessary to meet, or at least watch it. He sends a letter, therefore, as more weighty and impressive than a mere message. He warns Hezekiah against being himself deceived by Jehovah (verse 10), and he expands his inductive argument in proof of the irresistible might of Assyria, by an enumeration of four more recent conquests (verse 12). Otherwise, he does little but repeat what Rabshakeh had already urged. *Hammond.*

9. Tirhakah was one of the most powerful monarchs of ancient times. According to Manetho, he was the last king of the twenty-

fifth Egyptian dynasty, which was an Ethiopian house. He ruled not only Upper Egypt (Thebais), but also Ethiopia. His name appears in hieroglyphic-phonetic characters in one of the temples of Egypt. This rumor of his approach (predicted in verse 7) startled Sennacherib. His first effort was to urge Hezekiah to surrender. He must have assumed that Hezekiah had not heard the news from Egypt. H. C.

The history of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, receives illustration both from the monuments of Egypt and from those of Assyria. The monuments of Egypt place before us a king whom they call Tehrak, or Taharuka, at exactly the time when the Tirhakah of Scripture alarms Sennacherib. This monarch appears in the Egyptian records, first of all, as a hostile king of Ethiopia, whose power is unacknowledged in Egypt. Later he is found to have established his dominion over the lower country, and to be lord of the two Egypts, no less than of the Ethiopian highland. The point of time whereto the narrative of Isaiah belongs seems to be just when one of these two conditions was merging into the other. It does not appear that the two great rivals, Tirhakah and Sennacherib, ever came into contact. The miraculous destruction of the Assyrian host paralyzed the aggressor, and forced him to return hastily to his own land before his troops came into collision with those of his powerful antagonist. But that antagonist profited by his withdrawal. All the extant records show that Sennacherib's great failure was followed by the retirement of Assyria from the position of an assailant of Egypt; and that, as that country was too weak to stand alone, Ethiopia, in the absence of Assyria, obtained an undisputed supremacy. Hence the great name which Tirhakah obtained among the Greeks and Romans. The Assyrian records show us that the eminence of Tirhakah was maintained for nearly thirty years, and that it was only forfeited after a severe struggle with the Assyrians under Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib, who reduced all Egypt under his authority, and forced Tirhakah to retire upon Meroe, his capital. Egypt then passed under Assyria for a space of some two or three years (B.C. 671-669), during which period there was "a pathway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian came into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians served with the Assyrians" (Isa. 19 : 23). Esarhaddon vaingloriously styled himself during these years "King of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Meroe, and Ethiopia." But

even then the spirit of the great Ethiopian was not crushed. Tirhakah bided his time, and in B.C. 669, learning that the Assyrian monarch had fallen ill and partially abdicated his throne, he once more issued from his Ethiopian fastnesses, and burst upon the Nile valley with overwhelming force. Expelling the governors whom Esarhaddon had set up in the various towns, he established his court at Memphis, and reigned undisturbed for two (or perhaps three) years, Assyria making no effort against him. At length, however, in B.C. 667 (or 666), Sardanapalus (Assurbanipal), having succeeded his father, Esarhaddon, took in hand the recovery of Egypt, and in the course of a couple of years succeeded in re-establishing the Assyrian suzerainty. Tirhakah was once more compelled to fall back upon his native dominions, B.C. 665 (or 664); and his death happening about the same time, the Assyrian power was soon firmly established in Egypt, Ethiopian ascendancy was repressed, and henceforth no "king of Cush" was ever able to subject Egypt or even seriously trouble it. G. R.

#### THE PRAYERS OF HEZEKIAH AND OF ISAIAH.

*2 Kings 19 : 15-19 ; 2 Chronicles 32 : 20.*

Hezekiah received the letter of the king of Assyria, and "went into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord." The prayer, which is given, is one of exceeding sublimity, simplicity, and directness. It recognizes the God dwelling between the cherubim as the only God of the kingdoms of earth, and the maker of heaven and earth. It beseeches Jehovah to hear the reproachful words of the Assyrian king. It appeals to God's own honor, puts the trust of himself and his people for deliverance alone in Jehovah; and asks that His interposition in saving Judah may be so signal, "that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord God, even Thou only." The chronicler alone (verse 20) states that Isaiah, too, "prayed and cried to heaven." B.

Do by thy slander as Hezekiah did by the railing lines of Rabshakeh. Spread them before the Lord, and leave thy quarrel in the just hands of that great Arbiter of heaven and earth, who will be sure in His good time to revenge thy wrong and to clear thine innocence, and will require thee good for their causeless curses. *Abp. Tyllotson.*

Having heartened himself and pleaded with God by all these names, Hezekiah comes to his petition. It is but the putting into words of

the symbol of spreading the letter before God. He asks God to behold and to hear the defiant words. Prayer tells God what it knows that He knows already, for it relieves the burdened heart to tell Him. It asks Him to see and hear what it knows that He does see and hear. But the prayer is not for mere observance followed by no Divine act, but for taking knowledge as the precursor of the appropriate help. Of such seeing and hearing believing prayer is the appointed condition. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him;" but that is not a reason for silence, but for supplication. Hezekiah rightly regarded Sennacherib's words as meant to reproach the living God, for the point of the letter was to dissuade from trust in Him, as no more powerful than the petty deities of already conquered cities. The prayer, therefore, pleads that God would take care of His own honor, and, by delivering Jerusalem, show His sole sovereignty. It is a high and wonderful level for faith to reach, when it regards personal deliverance mainly in its aspect as vindicating God and warranting faith. It was noble that this man should have no word to say about self but "save us, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art God alone." Like him, we may each feel that our defence is more God's affair than ours, in proportion as we feel we are His rather than our own. That siege of Jerusalem was indeed as a duel between faith and unbelief, on the one hand, and between Jehovah and the gods who were "no gods" on the other. Sennacherib's letter was a defiant challenge to Jehovah to do His best for this people, and when faith repeated in prayer the insolence of unbelief only one result was possible. It came. A. M.

Liberty of access to the throne of grace and liberty of speech there are the unspeakable privilege of the Lord's people at all times, especially in times of distress and danger. Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter and spread it before the Lord, not designing to make any complaints against him but those grounded upon his own handwriting. Let the thing speak itself, here it is in black and white. *Open thine eyes, O Lord, and see.* God allows His praying people to be humbly free with Him, to utter all their words before Him, to spread the letter, whether of a friend or an enemy, before Him, and leave the contents, the concern of it, with Him. The great and fundamental principles of our religion, applied by faith and improved in prayer, will be of sovereign use to us in our particular exigencies and distresses, what-

ever they are; to them, therefore, we must have recourse, and abide by them; so Hezekiah did here. He encouraged himself with this, that the God of Israel is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; of the hosts of Israel, to animate them; of the hosts of their enemies, to dispirit and restrain them; that he is God alone, and there is none that can stand in competition with Him; that He is the *God of all the kingdoms of the earth* and disposes of them all as He pleases, for He made heaven and earth; and therefore both can do anything and does everything. H.

**That all the kingdoms of the earth may know.** If the mighty army of the great Assyrian king were successfully defied by a petty monarch like Hezekiah, it could not but draw the attention of the surrounding nations, who would be forced to confess that the escape was owing to the protecting hand of Jehovah, and would thus be taught, in spite of themselves, that He, and He alone, was the true God. The sentiment is exactly parallel to that uttered by David on occasion of the great confederacy against him (Ps. 83; 2 Sam. 10:6-16): "Let them be confounded and troubled forever: yea, let them be put to shame and perish; *that men may know that Thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth.*" Thus Hezekiah, the true follower of David, rises in his distress to the same height of self-abnegation, desiring the Divine help, not for his own sake, not even for the sake of his people, but for the glory of God—that His honor may be vindicated among surrounding nations. B. C.

Faith instinctively turns to God when anything goes wrong, because it has been accustomed to turn to Him when all was right, according to the world's estimate of right and wrong. Whither should the burdened heart betake itself but to Him who daily bears our burdens? The impulse to tell God all troubles is as truly a mark of the faithful soul as the impulse to tell everything to the beloved is the life breath of love. Our faith is of little power to bless unless it impels us to take God into confidence in regard to everything which troubles us. If the letter is not grave enough to be spread before Him, it is too small to annoy us. If we truly live in fellowship with God, we shall find ourselves in His house, with the cause of our trouble in our hands, before we have time to think. Instinct acts more quickly than reason, and, if our faith be vital, it will not need to be argued into speaking to God of all that weighs upon us. A. M.

The whole trouble must be spread before

Him ; God loves minuteness ; there is no spreading without minuteness. To speak out loud a sorrow or a care even to a thing inanimate is a help to definiteness, to clearness of thought, to manfulness, to duty ; how much more so when we confide in God. *J. Vaughan*.—Nothing that dulls me, nothing that makes a danger, or a difficulty, or a trial, or a temptation, but should be at once spread out before the Lord. Test your lives, your thoughts, your affairs, your purposes, by this—“ Will they stand carriage before the Lord ? ” If not, the sooner you get rid of them the better. And then, “ Be anxious for naught, but in *everything* by prayer and supplication and thanksgiving make your requests known unto God.” *A. M.*

THE ANSWER OF JEHOVAH BY THE MOUTH OF ISAIAH.

2 Kings 19 : 20-34.

God is the Hearer of prayer. As in the case of Daniel (9 : 20), while Hezekiah was still speaking, an answer was sent to him through Isaiah the prophet. Thus also answers to prayer were sent in the cases of Paul (Acts 9 : 10-18) and Cornelius (Acts 10 : 1-8). Isaiah was the one person whose faith had remained unshaken through all this crisis. But it is not merely Isaiah's confidence which speaks in this composition. He brought to the king a direct “ word of God.” His oracle is one of surpassing beauty, grand and sustained in style, and expressing the greatest truths. *J. O.*—Hezekiah spread the letter before God with a solemn prayer to Him to prove the difference between Jehovah, the only God, and the “ no gods ” whom the Assyrian had justly reproached ; and the answer was given by the mouth of Isaiah in a sublime prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian and the future glory of the remnant of Judah. *P. S.*

First of all, Hezekiah is assured that his prayer has been “ heard.” God has “ bowed down His ear ” to it (verse 16)—has taken it into His consideration, and has sent a reply. Then the reply follows, in fourteen verses arranged in four strophes or stanzas. The first (verses 21-24) and second (verses 25-28) are addressed to Sennacherib, and breathe a tone of scorn and contempt. The third (verses 29-31) is addressed to Hezekiah, and is encouraging and consolatory. The fourth (verses 32-34) is an assurance to all whom it may concern, that Jerusalem is safe, that Sennacherib will not take it, that he will not even commence its siege. *Hammond.*

**22. The Holy One of Israel.** This is

a favorite phrase with Isaiah, in whose prophecies it is found twenty-seven times, while it occurs five times only in the rest of Scripture (Ps. 71 : 22 ; 78 : 41 ; 89 : 18 ; Jer. 50 : 29 ; 51 : 5). Its occurrence here is a strong proof—one among many—of the genuineness of the present passage, which is not the composition of the writer of Kings, but an actual prophecy delivered at this time by Isaiah, bearing all the characteristic marks of that prophet's fervent and highly poetic style.

**23. And hast said.** Isaiah clothes in words the thoughts of Sennacherib's heart—the real thoughts that were present there when he wrote or dictated his letter, and which underlay the letter itself. These thoughts are thoughts of the extremest self-confidence. Sennacherib believes that by his own power and might he can trample down all opposition, overcome all obstacles, and conquer whatever countries he pleases. *B. C.*

**25. Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it ?** The strain suddenly changes—the person of the speaker is altered. It is no longer Sennacherib who reveals the thoughts of his own heart, but Jehovah who addresses the proud monarch. “ Hast thou not heard, how from long ago I have acted thus ? Hast thou never been taught that revolutions, conquests, the rise and fall of nations, are God's doing, decreed by Him long, long ago—ay, from the creation of the world ? Art thou not aware that this is so, either from tradition or by listening to the voice of reason within thine own heart ? ” It is implied that such knowledge ought to be in the possession of every man. **Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldst be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.** The idea was very familiar to Isaiah and his contemporaries. Years before, when Assyria first became threatening, Isaiah, speaking in the person of Jehovah, had exclaimed, “ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets ” (Isa. 10 : 5, 6). But the heathen kings whom God made His instruments to chasten sinful nations imagined that they conquered and destroyed and laid waste by their own strength (see Isa. 10 : 7-14). *Hammond.*

**26. Put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips.** The imagery is most striking. Captive kings were actually so

treated by the Assyrians themselves. A hook or split-ring was thrust through the cartilage of the nose, or the fleshy part of the under lip, with a rope or thong attached to it, and in this guise they were led into the monarch's presence, to receive their final sentence at his hands. In the sculptures of Sargon at Khorsabad we see three prisoners brought before him in this fashion, one of whom he seems to be about to kill with a spear. *Hammond*.—Forbearance is not forgiveness, and patient long-suffering is not oblivion. The same great lesson runs through the whole course of human history, from the rout of Chedorlaomer to the Moscow campaign. No leviathan is so powerful but the King of nations can put a hook in his nose and a bridle in his lips at the most fitting season. *Birks*.

**29. And this shall be a sign unto thee.** The prophet now once more addresses Hezekiah, and gives him a "sign" or token, whereby he and his may be assured that Sennacherib is indeed bridled, and will not trouble Judea any more. His people, whose land has been devastated by the march of the Assyrian army, shall find enough to eat during the remainder of the current year from the grain which has sown itself; in the ensuing (probably sabbatical) year they shall also be nourished sufficiently by the same means; in the third year, when they resume their agricultural labors, they shall be undisturbed in them, and reap their fruits in peace. This promise could not, of course, be a sign of the immediate relief of the city from the threatened attack, which relief took place before the promise began to be fulfilled (see verse 35); but it was a sign of what was of far greater importance—viz., the continued freedom of the land from attack during the whole of the remainder of Sennacherib's reign, a space of seventeen years. B. C.

We cannot fail to recognize the internal connection between this and the former utterance in Isa. 7 in regard to the Syro-Israelitish invasion in the time of Abaz. Once more we have "a sign" of the certainty of promised deliverance in an event as yet future. The absolute deliverance of Judah from the invasion of Assyria is guaranteed by this sign, that in the present year, when the ordinary operations of sowing had been interrupted, they would have sufficient for their support in that which sprang from the grains that had accidentally fallen out of the corn reaped at the former harvest. Similarly, as regarded the next year's harvest, for which it was impossible to make preparation, partly from the presence of the Assyrian army

and partly from the depopulation of the country, there would be sufficiency from the corn which sprang of itself (either on the old stems or from what dropped from unreaped ears). Lastly, in the third year, the ordinary agricultural operations would be resumed, because the Assyrian host would be gone without retaining occupation of the land, and because such as were left of the population would have returned to their homes from Jerusalem and the other fenced cities where they had sought refuge. Thus "the sign" lay in the promised certainty of their support through the Divine blessing on the land which Assyria boasted to have laid waste (verses 23, 24). Thus the provision for their present wants, and that for the agricultural year on which they had already entered, would in those two years be a constant sign that the relation between Jehovah and Sennacherib was what had been told, and that they had not to fear any return of the enemy. And so would this prophetic "sign"—"natural" by the special blessing of God, but "supernatural" when viewed by itself—be alike for comfort and the strengthening of faith, but also for the constant exercise of it. A. E.

**32, 33.** Hezekiah receives four clear promises, each one more comforting than the last. 1. Sennacherib shall not "enter into the city"—*i.e.*, it shall not be taken. 2. He shall not "shoot an arrow there"—*i.e.*, he shall not order the assault. 3. He shall not "come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it"—*i.e.*, there shall not even be the commencement of a siege. And 4. "By the way that he came, by the same shall he return"—*i.e.*, he shall not even approach the city, but shall return to Assyria by the same route by which he came, through the low country of the *Shephélah*, thus avoiding not only Jerusalem, but even Judea. B. C.

**32. Nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it.** We have here an exact picture of an ancient siege, such as is portrayed on the sculptures of Nineveh, in the picture of the siege of Lachish. The final means of capture was the mound raised against the wall of the beleaguered place. But for the erection of this the archers were indispensable. While the slaves and laborers of the army were heaping materials for the mound, the archers were continuously employed in shooting at every defender who appeared on the ramparts, galling them with their arrows, and thus protecting their workmen, or drawing off the attention of the enemy. The archers, as we see

from the Assyrian sculptures, were protected by the shieldman. The shield was a strong wooden frame, as high as a man, covered with leather, resting on the ground, and held by its bearer in front of the archer, who under its protection was not only safe, but was able to take deliberate aim. The mound was made of any materials that came to hand, with a gradual slope upward, till it almost reached the wall, and was not much inferior to it in height. When completed, battering-rams were plied from it against the upper part of the wall and the battlements, until a breach was effected. The mound was employed even to the later times of the Roman Empire. *Tristram.*

**34.** The two reasons assigned for defending the city were *His "own sake"*—the honor and glory of His name, now fully implicated by the blasphemies and boasts of the Assyrian king; and the promises He had made to David respecting his royal seed. (See 2 Sam. 7:12.) This promise looks not only to his pious successors, like Hezekiah, but pre-eminently to his greater Son, the promised Messiah. For the sake of all the interests embosomed in this royal seed and this future kingdom, God would surely protect Jerusalem against this proud, blasphemous foe. H. C.

God intended all along to teach the Jews that the earth and heaven belonged to Him and obeyed Him. He taught them and the proud king of Assyria once and for all that He was indeed the Lord, Lord of all nations and King of kings, and also Lord of the earth and all that therein is. Those who really trust in Him shall never be confounded. Those who trust in themselves are trying their paltry strength against the God who made heaven and earth, and will surely find out their own weakness, just when they fancy themselves most successful. If man dare not fight on the Lord's side against sin and evil, the Lord's earth will fight for Him. Earthquakes and burning mountains will do His work. *C. Kingsley.*

Never, it has been justly remarked, had a prophet predicted more boldly, never was a prediction more brilliantly fulfilled. The blow which fell upon Sennacherib's army in time to save the Jewish State was a coincidence which no political forecast could have anticipated, no estimate of probabilities calculated. Yet Isaiah's foreknowledge of it was of long standing, certain, and precise. Not once, but repeatedly, even before Sennacherib's army had appeared on the north of Palestine, and while all seemed calm on the political horizon, he had announced, not merely the distress in which before long Jeru-

salem would find herself, but the unexpected and startling interposition by which she would be released from it. *Driver.*

**35-37.** *The destruction of the Assyrian host, and subsequent assassination of Sennacherib.* On the same night came upon the great army of Sennacherib, far distant from Jerusalem, a supernatural slaughter. One hundred and eighty-four thousand Assyrians were in some way destroyed by Divine power. Of the agency of the destruction we know nothing; the fact and the author only are given in the narrative. The number of the slain and the greatness of the disaster compelled the king of Assyria to return from his campaign against Egypt. Through the remainder of Hezekiah's reign, no further attempt was made against Judah by Sennacherib. Seventeen years after this miraculous overthrow of so large a portion of his army, the king was slain by two of his sons while he was worshipping in his temple. B.

**35.** Here in fewest words is the grand, sublime event which vindicated the dishonored name of Jehovah; brought down just retribution on the haughty, impious Assyrian; plucked God's praying people from the open jaws of ruin, and gave a glorious testimony to the faithfulness, the power and the presence of Israel's God. It became a night to be ever remembered of the Lord's ancient people; a fountain of religious impulse; a theme of fresh and grateful praise for ages to the escaped of Israel. H. C.

**When they arose early in the morning, behold, etc.** These words form the only trustworthy data that we possess for determining to any extent the *manner* of the destruction now wrought. They imply that there was no disturbance during the night, no alarm, no knowledge on the part of the living that their comrades were dying all around them by thousands. Hence we may at once put aside several of the conjectures of commentators—as those of a nocturnal attack by Tirhakah (Ussher, Preiss, Michaelis), of a terrible storm (Vitringa, Stanley), of the plague (Gesenius, Dathe, Maurer, Winer, etc.), of the simoom (Prideaux, Milman)—none of which would have left the survivors wholly unconscious of evil till morning came. On the whole, it would seem that all mere natural causes must be rejected, and God must be regarded as having slain the men in their sleep without causing disturbance, either by a peculiar pestilence called into being for the occasion, or by that "visitation" of which English law speaks. The most nearly

parallel case is the destruction of the first-born, which (it may be observed) is also ascribed to a destroying angel (Ex. 12 : 23). B. C.

There is no need of departing from the strict sense of the words, or of disputing whether by the angel of the Lord we are to understand a storm, a hot wind, or a pestilential fever. The terms used can naturally signify nothing but a single instantaneous stroke of Divine vengeance. The parallel narrative in 2 Chron. 32 : 21, instead of numbering the slain, says that all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders, and the captains in the camp of the Assyrian were cut off. Where this terrific overthrow took place has been disputed and can never be determined, in the absence of all data, monumental or historical. Throughout the sacred narrative it seems to be intentionally left uncertain whether Jerusalem was besieged at all, whether Sennacherib in person ever came before it, whether his army was divided or united when the stroke befell them, and also what proportion of the host escaped. It is enough to know that one hundred and eighty five thousand men perished in a single night. A.—These unanswered questions do not invalidate the great facts of the narrative, nor in any wise abate from the moral force of the great lessons which it teaches. Perhaps it was the Lord's special design to foreclose our critical and historical inquiries in order to shut us up the more closely to the consideration of these great moral lessons. Be this as it may, it behooves us to account these moral lessons the main thing, and to give them our chief and very earnest attention. H. C.

**36. Dwelt at Nineveh.** The meaning seems to be, not that Sennacherib made no more expeditions at all, which would be untrue, for his annals show us that he warred in Armenia, Babylonia, Susiana, and Cilicia, during his later years ; but that he confined himself to his own part of Asia, and did not invade Palestine or threaten Jerusalem any more. Nineveh appears here unmistakably as the Assyrian capital.

**37. And it came to pass.** The death of Sennacherib, which took place many years afterward (B. C. 680), is related here, as, from the Divine point of view, the sequel to his Syrian expeditions. The arrogant blasphemer is punished doubly—first, by the destruction of his host, and then by death at the hands of his sons. B. C.—He was murdered in the temple of Nisroch by two of his sons, Adrammelech and Sharezer, who fled into Armenia, and was succeeded by another son, Esarhaddon, one of

the most powerful of the Assyrian monarchs. P. S.

**2 Chron. 32 : 22, 23.** The fame of Hezekiah's deliverance brought him congratulations and presents from all the surrounding nations ; and the remainder of the days, which God's special grace had added to his life, were spent in prosperity and wealth. Like Uzziah, he possessed numerous flocks and herds, in addition to the treasures that he collected at Jerusalem. When he died, he was honored with the chief place in the sepulchres of the kings (B. C. 698). The glorious promise of his reign was terribly eclipsed under his successor. P. S.

The contrast between the devout, God-fearing, God-trusting Hezekiah, and the proud, self-trusting, self-asserting Sennacherib is one of the most striking and instructive in Scripture. The two are set one over against the other in the most graphic way. *Hammond.*

Hezekiah "went unto the house of the Lord," and found Him a very present help in trouble. Sennacherib was slain in the house of his god. The two pictures of the worshippers and their fates are symbolic of the meaning of the whole story. Sennacherib had dared Jehovah to try his strength against him and his deities. The challenge was accepted, and that bloody corpse before the idol that could not help preaches a ghastly sermon on the text, "They that make them are like unto them ; so is every one that trusteth in them. O Israel, trust thou in the Lord : He is their help and their shield." A. M.

Yet other thoughts come to us—how the worldly policy of even a Hezekiah in forming alliances against Assyria was rebuked, and he learned in the school of affliction and humiliation to turn from all such help to God, and then obtained mercy ; and how from the first Isaiah stood forth faithful in his warnings, and calm and unshaken in his confidence, the true prophet and representative of the Lord. And yet beyond these lessons, which are to all times, comes to the Church and to every member of it the conviction that He who supernaturally, although by what we call natural means, once swept away the host of Egypt and again laid dead the proud warriors of Assyria, also watches with ever-mindful care over the meanest of His creatures, so that not a sparrow can fall to the ground without His knowledge, nor yet any harm befall His people, nor earthly might overthrow His cause. For He of old is the living and the true God. A. E.

*Parties in Judah during Reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah.*

The Egyptian party was numerous in Jerusalem. Opposed to the Egyptian was the Assyrian party, which advocated submission to the all-powerful empire of Assyria. A party, which we may call national, was headed by Isaiah. It drew its policy and its existence from the words of Divine counsel which the prophet uttered, and the message he was commissioned to deliver. Its watchword was "quietness and rest;" "in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." It was a policy of non-intervention, that was opposed to an alliance with Assyria or Egypt; Judah had gained nothing but evil from intermeddling with the politics of its heathen neighbors, its religion and morality had been corrupted, and calamity after calamity had fallen on the nation. God had marked it out as "a peculiar people," and its safety lay in the national recognition of the fact. It was He who had permitted the Assyrian to be the rod of His anger, and had allowed him to chastise and chasten the sins of His people; but the chastisement was not to be utter destruction, and a bound had been set beyond which the violence of the invader was not to go. A remnant was yet to escape from Zion, and the Assyrian should be beaten down "which smote with a rod." Isaiah preached for long to deaf ears. Ahaz turned for help to the Assyrian, Hezekiah to the Egyptian. King and people alike could not believe that the Lord would interfere on behalf of His city, and overthrow the foe in the very moment of his success. Hezekiah might accept the rebuke of the prophet for his pride of heart in showing the ambassadors of Babylon the treasures of his house, but he did not forsake the policy he was following, and cease to plot with Egypt and Babylonia against the Assyrian king. It needed the campaign of Sennacherib and the signal deliverance of Jerusalem from the victorious enemy to convince Hezekiah that Egypt should indeed "help in vain," and that the true policy of himself and his country was that which had so long been pressed upon them by Isaiah. If he and his people would trust in the Lord, and abstain from all intrigues with foreign powers, they might rest in peace and safety, for the Lord Himself would defend them in the hour of need. And though with the death of Hezekiah evil days came again upon Judah—days which, we may gather, Isaiah was privileged never to see—the effect

of the prophet's policy continued to be felt. The house of David and the national existence of the people over whom it ruled were preserved until a new king arose in Assyria and inaugurated new principles of government. The Temple and kingdom of Jerusalem were saved till the time was ripe for the chosen people to pass through the fiery ordeal of the Babylonish exile. *Sayce.*

*Differing Policies of Isaiah and Jeremiah Explained and Justified.*

The position occupied by Isaiah was necessitated by the age to which he belonged. The message he communicated was in accordance with the conditions of his time. Hence arises the striking contrast between the policy of which he was the mouthpiece, and that which Jeremiah was called upon to urge. While Isaiah advocated resistance to the invader, in confident security that God would defend His Temple and city, Jeremiah declared that no buildings made with hands could save the people, and that submission to the Chaldean was their only hope of safety. Isaiah, in other words, was the prophet of national independence, Jeremiah of national subjection. But between the time of Isaiah and that of Jeremiah a total change had come over the face of the Eastern world. Nebuchadnezzar was a more dangerous enemy than Sennacherib; Egypt had risen afresh from its ashes, and was prepared to reassert its ancient rule over Palestine, and Judah itself had sunk into the deepest degradation and decay. Its princes were idolatrous and corrupt, and Nebuchadnezzar himself was a more reverent observer of the moral law than they. The measure of Judah's iniquities was full; the period of God's long-suffering had drawn to a close, and there was no king on the throne like Hezekiah to follow loyally the teachings of the prophet, no minister like Eliakim to carry them out. The Lord would fight no longer for His city and the earthly throne of David; His people were to be disciplined by suffering, and to be taught that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but requires truth and uprightness, not correctness of ritual or stately shrines.

The policy, then, which Isaiah was empowered to press upon his countrymen, the promises he was commissioned to hold out, were adapted to other circumstances and other needs than those which confronted Jeremiah. The object and end of both prophets was the same, but the means for effecting the end were neces-



sarily different. Jeremiah lived when the old national independence, with its Oriental court and foreign alliances, had ceased to be possible or desirable; Isaiah's lot was cast in a happier age, when the safe-keeping of Jerusalem was needful to the Divine education of the people of the Lord. He had the privilege of leading the national struggle against foreign oppression

and heathen arrogance, of promising success to his countrymen in their supreme hour of peril, and of seeing that promise fulfilled. The hosts of the Assyrian, which none had yet been able to resist, were shattered against the walls of Jerusalem, and Isaiah's had been the voice of the herald which announced the doom of the enemies of Israel. *Sayce.*

## Section 42.

### REIGNS OF MANASSEH AND AMON.

#### 2 CHRONICLES 33 : 1-25.

1 MANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and five  
2 years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD  
3 cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; and he reared up altars for the Baalim, and made Asheroth, and worshipped all the host of  
4 heaven, and served them. And he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD said, In Jerusalem shall my name be  
5 for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of  
6 the LORD. He also made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: and he practised augury, and used enchantments, and practised sorcery, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him  
7 to anger. And he set the graven image of the idol, which he had made, in the house of God, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:  
8 neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from off the land which I have appointed for your fathers; if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them, even all the law and the statutes and  
9 the ordinances by the hand of Moses. And Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, so that they did evil more than did the nations, whom the LORD  
10 destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his peo-  
11 ple: but they gave no heed. Wherefore

#### 2 KINGS 21 : 1-26.

1 MANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned five and fifty years in Jerusalem: and his mother's  
2 name was Hephzi-bah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children  
3 of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made an Asherah, as did Ahab king of Israel, and worshipped all the host of  
4 heaven, and served them. And he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my  
5 name. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of  
6 the LORD. And he made his son to pass through the fire, and practised augury, and used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the  
7 LORD, to provoke him to anger. And he set the graven image of Asherah, that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I  
8 put my name for ever: neither will I cause the feet of Israel to wander any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; if only they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to  
9 all the law that my servant Moses commanded them. But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do that which is evil more than did the nations, whom the  
10 LORD destroyed before the children of Is-  
11 rael. And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh

- the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.
- 12 And when he was in distress, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself
- 13 greatly before the God of his fathers. And he prayed unto him; and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.
- 14 Now after this he built an outer wall to the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate; and he compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height: and he put valiant captains in all the fenced cities
- 15 of Judah. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.
- 16 And he built up the altar of the LORD, and offered thereon sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.
- 17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, but only unto the LORD
- 18 their God. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, behold, they are written among the acts of the
- 19 kings of Israel. His prayer also, and how God was intreated of him, and all his sin and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up the Asherim and the graven images, before he humbled himself: behold, they are written in the history of
- 20 Hozai. So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.
- 21 Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years
- 22 in Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: and Amon sacrificed unto all the graven images which Manasseh his
- 23 father had made, and served them. And he humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but this same Amon trespassed more and
- 24 more. And his servants conspired against him, and put him to death in his own house.
- 25 But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king
- king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I bring such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.
- 18 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it
- 14 upside down. And I will cast off the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their
- 15 enemies; because they have done that which is evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.
- 16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was
- 17 evil in the sight of the LORD. Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the
- 18 kings of Judah? And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.
- 19 Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign; and he reigned two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of
- 20 Haruz of Jobah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did
- 21 Manasseh his father. And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and
- 22 worshipped them: and he forsook the LORD, the God of his fathers, and walked not in
- 23 the way of the LORD. And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and put the
- 24 king to death in his own house. But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in
- 25 his stead. Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Ju-
- 26 dah? And he was buried in his sepulchre in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his stead.

THE fifty-five years of Manasseh were probably 695-641 B.C. The two years of Amon were probably 640 and 639 B.C.

*Contemporary History.* During Manasseh's reign, the Assyrian kings were, counting from the "first year" of each: Sennacherib, B.C. 704-681; Esarhaddon, 680-668; Assurbanipal (Sardanapalus), 667 to some unknown date; his "first year" as king of Babylon was 647 B.C.

*References in the Prophets to the Reigns of Manasseh and Amon.* 1. Manasseh's shedding innocent blood (Jer. 15:4; 2:30, 34, etc.; perhaps Isa. 1:15, etc.). 2. To Manasseh's reform, followed by the relapse under Amon, perhaps Jer. 3:10 and context, and Zeph. 1:4-6, with many like passages in Zephaniah and the early parts of Jeremiah. W. J. B.

The account in Chronicles differs chiefly from Kings in omitting (1) the names of the two queen-mothers, (2) the shedding of innocent blood by Manasseh, (3) the words of warning addressed to him, and (4) the circumstances of the burial of Amon; and, more importantly, in adding (1) the account of Manasseh's captivity, (2) of his repentance and restoration to his kingdom, (3) of his buildings, (4) of his abolition of idolatry, and (5) of the ample records that existed of his reign. The central part of the chapter, from verse 11 to verse 19, is thus almost entirely new matter, while the earlier and the later portions correspond closely with Kings, and are, on the whole, less ample. B. C.

#### REIGN OF MANASSEH, FIFTY-FIVE YEARS.

2 *Chronicles* 33:1-19; 2 *Kings* 21:1-18.

The longest and worst reign has the briefest record; chiefly because of the slaughter of God's prophets, who are the principal historians. Eighteen verses in the Book of Kings and twenty verses in the Chronicles (many of which are identical in the two accounts), with hints elsewhere, comprise the written history of a reign of fifty-five years. But what is lacking in amplification is made up in conciseness. The monstrous details of Manasseh's manifold iniquities and fearful guilt are summarily condensed in the first nine verses. No clew is given by the historian, here or in the Kings, of the influences which so utterly transformed the son of a good father into a signally destructive agent of Satan. Both at the outset of his reign and afterward he was wholly un-

like Joash and Josiah, whose rule also began in childhood, and at even an earlier age. The case of Joash we understand clearly, and that of Josiah we can readily conjecture. Both of these were, in the providence of God, rescued from an evil parentage and trained under godly influence. The reasonable inference is, that Manasseh's childhood was subjected to ungodly teaching from kindred and courtiers. The extreme contrast in character and reign between the two former and Manasseh, suggests the vital and always needed lesson of the tremendous obligation resting upon parents and friends in the forming and training of youthful character. Living illustrations abound in these days to emphasize this lesson—a lesson found in every reign of the kings of Judah and Israel; found, too, in almost every other personal history of the sacred records.

Manasseh's wickedness was pre-eminently shameless and God-defying. All the particular iniquities of previous evil reigns he re-enacted and surpassed. Nay more, he equalled the heathen in his abominations, and far outdid them in his guilt. They sinned in comparative ignorance; he with full knowledge of God, and of His dealings with the kings and nations of Israel and Judah. A marvel of hardness of soul is he presented to us. A monster of iniquity, exceeding in daring impiety not only his grandfather, Ahaz, but even the two kings of Israel, Jeroboam and Ahab. He presents, perhaps, the foremost illustration of the extent and magnitude of possible human iniquity in all history, sacred or profane. Even a Nero had not the knowledge of God. According to the sacred record, Manasseh introduced into Judah every form of idolatrous worship and abominable vice that had been practised by heathen nations. He deliberately undid all the good work of his father. He restored the high places and the idolatrous altars which Hezekiah had removed. He re-established the foul worship of Baal, "and added to the obscene rites of Ashtaroth those unutterable abominations which made princes and subjects 'rulers of Sodom, and people of Gomorrah.'" Nor this only. His daring went further than Ahaz, who had only closed the sanctuary, and dismissed the priesthood. Manasseh signalized his iniquity by a fearful desecration of the Holy Place, the very chamber dedicated to Jehovah and long consecrated by the symbol of His presence. In this chamber he set up a carved image as an object of supreme worship, and upon the very spot once illumined by the

Shekinah. In the courts of the Temple he reared altars for the Babylonish worship of the heavenly bodies. He erected in the valley of Hinnom a temple to the fire-god Moloch, and offered his own children in sacrifice. "He dealt with wizards and necromancers, and seduced the people to do *more* wickedness than the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before them." And his was the fearful pre-eminence of inaugurating the persecution to the death of God's saints. He made Jerusalem the arena of the first of those martyrdoms to which Paul refers in the eleventh of Hebrews. He shed the innocent blood of multitudes of devout worshippers and religious teachers. That most illustrious prophet, who had been the foremost teacher of God's people and counsellor of kings through four reigns; he whose chapters contain the richest treasure of evangelical truth found in the Old Testament; he whose inspired vision of Christ's suffering and glory was so wonderfully fulfilled in the Messiah's trial, crucifixion and burial—Isaiah, the aged, the inspired seer and faithful saint, was the chief object of this monster's cruelty, the signal victim of his murderous torture. B.

So far as foreign enemies were concerned, Judea enjoyed an interval of profound peace. Sennacherib, from the date of the destruction of his host, carefully avoided all contact with the nation of the Jews; and thus Manasseh had reigned for nearly twenty years before any necessity arose for him to consider whether he should follow the example of his father in his defiance of the Assyrian power, or, like his grandfather, should tamely submit to it. Ahaz was his model in the internal conduct of his kingdom; why should he not follow him also in its external management? Therefore, when Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son and successor, about the year B.C. 680, made an expedition into Palestine with the object of re-establishing Assyrian influence in the southwest, Manasseh seems to have submitted to him without a murmur, and to have resumed that position of Assyrian tributary which Hezekiah had succeeded in throwing off. On a broken cylinder of Esarhaddon's, containing a notice of his second year, we find "Manasseh, king of Judah," mentioned, together with the kings of Tyre, Edom, Moab, Gaza, Askelon, Ekron, Gebal, Arvad, Ammon, Ashdod, and ten Cyprian monarchs, in a connection that implies his subjection to the empire of Assyria. Later on, however, the Jewish monarch seems to have repented of his tame submission, and to have

been guilty of acts which his Assyrian suzerain regarded as rebellious. About the year B.C. 672 an army was sent against him under Assyrian captains, which, according to Josephus, ravaged his territory, and got possession of his person by stratagem. His captors led him away prisoner, and brought him into the presence of Esarhaddon at Babylon. There for some time he remained in captivity, but at length, in answer (as he believed) to the fervent prayers which in his affliction he addressed to Jehovah, the royal clemency was shown to him. Not only was he released from prison, but Esarhaddon once more received him into favor, and even sent him back to Jerusalem to reign again as tributary monarch. Such clemency is not wholly unexampled in Assyrian history; but we may fairly assume that Esarhaddon was actuated in the business by policy rather than by compassion. He was contemplating a serious struggle for supremacy with Egypt, and it was of great importance to him to have so strong a fortress as Jerusalem, and one situated so near the Egyptian frontier, held for him by a trusty adherent. He must have believed in gratitude as a powerful constraining motive, and have thought that a forgiven enemy would be the surest friend. Manasseh, as far as is known, did not disappoint him. The only Palestinian power which deserted Assyria in its struggle with Egypt seems to have been Tyre. According to the author of Chronicles, the repentance of Manasseh in his captivity at Babylon was a true repentance, and was fully maintained after his return to his kingdom. But Manasseh, though he might repent of the past, could not undo it. He had slain many of the more godly among the people, and had left the profane and the idolatrous. He had made havoc of the prophetic order, silenced the warning voices, and let a generation grow up without any sound religious teaching. After the murder of Isaiah no new prophet seems to have been raised up until the reign of Josiah had begun. Hence his reformation failed to reach the hearts of the nation. In spite of his persuasions and commands, the people could not be weaned from the high place worship which he had at one time encouraged, but "did sacrifice still in the high places," swore by the name of Malcham (Zeph. 1:5), and worshipped the host of heaven upon the housetops (*ibid*). There was no genuine reaction from the idolatry of Manasseh as there was from that of Ahaz, no real turning of the people to God with true and unfeigned repentance. Manasseh died after a reign of fifty-

five years, at the age of sixty-seven, and was buried in Jerusalem; but, as there was no more room in the burial-place of David, a tomb was made for him in his own palace garden, in a portion of it known as "the garden of Uzzah." He left his throne to his son, Amon. G. R.

**2 K. 21 : 10-18.** Here is the doom of Judah and Jerusalem read, and it is a heavy doom. The prophets were sent, in the first place, to teach them the knowledge of God, to remind them of their duty, and direct them in it; if they succeeded not in that, their next work was to reprove them for their sins, and to set them in view before them, that they might repent and reform and return to their duty; if in this they prevailed not, but sinners went on frowardly, their next work was to foretell the judgments of God, that the terror of them might awaken those to repentance who would not be made sensible of the obligations of His love, or else that the execution of them in their season might be a demonstration of the Divine mission of the prophets that foretold them. The prophets were deputed judges to those that would not hear and receive them as teachers. H.

Ewald sums up the state of things as follows: "The atmosphere of the age was poisoned from above; and the leaders of the people of every class, whose moral decline had already become a subject of lament in the preceding century, sank into an almost incredible degeneracy. The prophets, who ought to have been ever the most loyal guardians of the truth, were for the most part like dumb and greedy dogs; many of the priests allowed themselves to be seduced into offering heathen sacrifices; the judges and nobles paid little heed to the eternal right. Equivocation and hypocrisy spread among those who ought to have ministered most austere to public truthfulness of life; while those who were engaged in commerce and trade sank into the harshest indifference to every higher aim, and thought only of the acquisition and enjoyment of wealth. So terrible was the demoralization which set in under Manasseh, that those who remained faithful to the ancient religion were either scoffed at as fools, or allowed to perish in cold contempt without any effort being made to save them, and were even derided after their death." The moral and spiritual depravity of Judah, though it only came to a head in the time of Manasseh, had its roots in a long-distant past. As Stephen pointed out to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7 : 39-43), it began in the wilderness with the wor-

ship of the golden calf, and went on to the worship of the host of heaven, of Moloch, and of Remphan; it was shown markedly in the terrible sin of Peor (Num. 25 : 1-8); it stunted God's hand when the nations had to be driven out from Caanan (Judges 2 : 1-5); it provoked God's anger greatly during the whole period of the Judges (Judges 2 : 11-10); checked under David and Solomon, it broke out afresh on the accession of Rehoboam (1 K. 14 : 22-24), and showed itself, more or less, under every subsequent king, culminating at last in that fearful condition of things which has been described above. *Hammond.*

**2 Chron. 33 : 10, 11.** *God's marvellous forbearance and merciful chastening exercised even toward this sacrilegious blasphemer, and persecutor of the saints.* This was manifest, first, in warnings by the prophets uttered to Manasseh and his people. These warnings we read in 2 K. 21 : 10-15. The warning voices of the Divine messengers were silenced in their blood. The sacred history declares that this was the crowning sin, which subsequently brought the doom of destruction upon the nation. Then the Lord sent reverses upon the nation. The Philistines, Moabites and Ammonites successfully revolted. Next Sennacherib's successor, Esarhaddon, destroyed Jerusalem, took Manasseh captive, bound him with chains, and caused him to be led to Babylon. Here he was imprisoned for an indefinite period. But God did not destroy him. He gave him a period for reflection, and an opportunity for repentance. B.

Manasseh is carried captive to a king of Assyria, not in Nineveh, but in Babylon, which when last heard of was the capital city of Merodach-baladan, an enemy of Assyria. Evidently by some great change a new state of things has been brought about. Here the inscriptions of Assyria, especially those of Esarhaddon and his son Assurbanipal (Sardanapalus), make what was otherwise obscure perfectly plain. Sennacherib tells us that he conquered Babylon, and established a son as viceroy there. Esarhaddon takes from the very beginning of his reign the double title, "king of Assyria and king of Babylon." Bricks bearing his name have been found at Babylon, and indicate that he built himself a palace there. Assurbanipal, his son, tells us that Esarhaddon, toward the close of his life, having become infirm, relinquished the government of Assyria altogether, and retiring to Babylon, made it his constant residence, and contented himself with ruling that portion of

his dominions. Thus the presentation of a captive prince to an Assyrian monarch at *Babylon*, which would have been strange and inexplicable at any earlier period, is natural in the time of Esarhaddon, with whom Manasseh was contemporary. Manasseh might without any strangeness have been brought to Esarhaddon at the southern capital during any period of his reign. If his capture fell, as it probably did, late in Esarhaddon's reign, Babylon, which had then become that monarch's permanent residence, would necessarily be the scene of the interview. G. R.

**12.** *God's yet more wonderful mercy in response to the prayer of this royal penitent.* Mark the impressive record. Manasseh "came to himself." He "humbled himself greatly, and prayed unto the God of his fathers; and He was entreated of him and heard his supplication." God made of this kingly blasphemer and persecutor a distinguished "pattern of his long-suffering to men." As if to show the greatness of His grace, He singles him out, among the many evil kings of Israel and Judah, for forgiveness. He restored him again to his kingdom. *Then*, the record declares, *Manasseh knew that Jehovah was the true God.* B.

**When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord.** Manasseh might now say with his grandfather David, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." His prison was now a more happy place for him than his palace; Babylon a better school than Jerusalem. What fools are we to frown on our afflictions! These, how severe soever, are our best friends. They are not indeed for our present pleasure, but they are for our lasting profit.

**13. And He was entreated of him.** We wonder not at Manasseh sinning or repenting; we wonder at the goodness of God, who thus graciously called him to repent and received him repenting; that as he had before been a most loathsome and monstrous spectacle of wickedness, he now became a pleasing and useful pattern of conversion. Who can despair of the mercy of God that sees the tears of a Manasseh accepted? The wickedness of men can never equal the goodness of God. **Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.** Till his own smart and cure, Manasseh knew not that the Lord was God. The Almighty will be sure to be known for what He is, if not by His kindness, at least by His severity. If our prosperity and peace and sweet experience of His mercy can win us to acknowledge Him, it is more for our ease; but

if we will needs be taught by stripes, it is more for His glory. *Bp. H.*

The pardon extended by Esarhaddon to Manasseh, little consonant as it is with general Oriental practice, agrees well with the character of this particular monarch, whose rule was remarkably mild, and who is proved by his inscriptions to have been equally merciful on other occasions. G. R.—While Sargon and Sennacherib were employed in extending the empire and carrying out the dreams of Tiglath-pileser by brute force, it was reserved for Esarhaddon to consolidate their conquests by a milder administration and fuller permission for the development of the national life. The vanquished nations were no longer compelled to become Assyrians and to acknowledge Assur as their god; they were allowed to retain their old habits and customs, their old religion, even their old form of government. In place of the satraps the native kings were allowed to preserve their sway over the subject populations; Manasseh of Judah was as much a servant of "the great king" as the Assyrian governor of Samaria, but so long as he acknowledged the supremacy of Nineveh and paid the annual tribute he was allowed to govern his people after the fashion of his fathers. It was only where the older lines of rulers had been replaced by satraps before the change took place in the imperial policy that the order of things established by Sennacherib and his predecessors continued to prevail; elsewhere, in Judah, in Edom, in the petty principalities of Egypt, the government was left in the hands of the native princes. *Sayce.*

**14-16.** *The evidence of Manasseh's true repentance.* He sought to undo all his evil work. He took away the idol image from the holy place, and cast out the strange gods and altars from the whole city. He further sought to remove the high places of idolatrous worship throughout the land. He reared anew the altar of sacrifice, and restored the Temple worship. Upon the great altar he sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings, "and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel." But we learn from verse 17 that Manasseh found it impossible to undo his own previous evil work. The people retained many of the high places. The associations of habit had made these places too familiar and dear to be given up. Nominally professing to worship Jehovah in them, they yet retained much of the spirit of the idolatrous worship. It was easy, therefore, for Amon, the son of Manasseh, to restore the whole system of idolatrous worship in the land.

We recall three prominent points, illustrated more signally here, perhaps, than elsewhere in the whole Bible. 1. A more eminent type even than Paul was Manasseh of the long-suffering of God; for Paul was not such a transgressor. He sinned ignorantly against his Lord, whom he knew not. His life was blameless. His persecuting spirit proceeded from a conscientious though wrongly taught conviction of duty. In all these points Manasseh's evil-doing is sharply contrasted. His sin was committed with full knowledge, and in the face of clear warnings. He practised and encouraged impurity and blasphemy, notwithstanding the plain record of God's dealings with his fathers; dealings of goodness and mercy toward the obedient and faithful kings, and of judgment upon the disobedient and unfaithful. That God should have shown mercy to Manasseh, therefore, signally illustrates His forbearance and long-suffering.

2. The same facts, in God's dealing with Manasseh, teach us the greatness of His grace to men, in His positive exercise of that grace in Manasseh's behalf. Not only did He forbear with this guilty king, not only did He refrain from visiting extreme judgment upon his iniquities, but by the visitation of His Spirit did He actually seek and persuade this transgressor to repentance and return to Himself. He convinced him of his sin, and renewed in him the spirit of trustful obedience. Manasseh was a sinner saved by grace. Who, then, may despair of God's mercy with such an instance of the greatness of His grace as is here recorded?

3. When the goodness of God fails of its purposed effect in leading to repentance, He sends affliction for this end. When chastening fails, God uses no further agency of mercy. Transgressors are then abandoned to their own way, the end whereof is perdition. And this perdition is their own work. B.

We are taught by the story of Manasseh's repentance: 1. *The seeds of early instruction may blossom after many days.* Who can doubt but that it was the impressions received in early days which at last revived and brought Manasseh back to Jehovah? 2. *There is hope for the worst sinners.* After Manasseh, surely any one. Nor did his conversion take place till his course was nearly run. We should despair of none. Miracles of grace as great as this have perhaps rarely been witnessed, but they have been witnessed. 3. *God subdues men to Himself by affliction.* It was while a prisoner in Babylon—taken there by the captains of the king of Assyria—that Manasseh found the Lord.

4. *Repentance does not secure the reversal of the temporal effects of sin.* The wickedness of Manasseh through a long reign wrought out its effects independently of him. His conversion came too late to undo them. The blood he had shed "the Lord would not pardon." The nation was inculcated as well as he, and though he repented, it did not. It is an awful thought that no after-repentance can obliterate the effects of words spoken and deeds done while sin still had dominion over us. Nor can the effects of sin on our own health, characters, usefulness, etc., ever be completely recalled. J. O.

His life is the old story—sin, chastisement, repentance and forgiveness. We are told that in his captivity "he humbled himself *greatly*." A certain *proportion* runs through his history. A great sinner, a great sufferer, a great penitent. God works thoroughly. He is faithful in adjusting the discipline to the exigency. Whom He loves, He chastens proportionately to His necessities. He spares not the rod at the expense of the child's soul. He plans for eternity, not for time. So would we have it, would we not, in the experience of our children? Often is this experience repeated in common life, whether our weak souls would so have it or not. God is faithful beyond our desires. Like other wise fathers, He adjusts His dealings to the *future* judgment and desires of His children. He trusts to eternity for His justification in our sight. The prayers of the Christian father and mother for the wayward son are answered in waves and billows of affliction often, till the prodigal comes back, and humbles himself *greatly*, and says, "I have sinned against my father and my father's God." *Phelps*.

How much encouragement is here to hope and pray and labor perseveringly for the conversion of sinful men, and especially of those whose early youth has been blessed with holy prayers and pious instructions! We are not to despair of any man. Few cases ever presented a more desperate and discouraging aspect than that of Manasseh. His wickedness began early and continued long. He grew into manhood a bold transgressor. He "framed iniquity for a law." His sin was high-handed, public and shameless. He grew hoary-headed in sin. He had not only thrown aside the restraints of truth, but he had sanctified falsehood, and found a religion to sanction his sins and turn them into a semblance of piety. Still he was not beyond repentance, not incapable of repentance, for he did repent. There were avenues to his heart still open to the approaches

of the Spirit. There were resources in Divine providence sufficient to bring back his soul from the pit. May it not be so of any man who is going on still in his wickedness? Ah! let us never despair of the sinner. Let the sinner never despair of himself. God may not have given him up; it may be that He yet waits to be gracious to him. It is not ours to utter decrees of reprobation on ourselves or on others. *Hallam.*

Often is it said of the penitent thief on the cross, that *one* such case is recorded in the Scriptures, that none may despair of repentance on a death-bed; and *but* one, that none may presume. Similar is the twofold lesson to be learned from the recovery of this fallen monarch. He tried the fearful experiment of abandoning the God of his fathers, and becoming a monument of illustrious guilt. Through bitter disappointment and humiliating sorrow he was saved. The Scriptures expressly contradict the Jewish tradition. But he was one of a thousand. No other such is clearly declared in the Scriptures to have run that risk with safety at the last. God *can* save a soul in such an extremity of sin; but it is like lifting to its place again a fallen star. Fallen stars generally go out in darkness. The general law of God's dealings with men is that strange and unnatural wickedness shall be left to itself to work out its own penalties. This it did in the case of King Ahaz. *Phelps.*

There is no limit to the mercy of God. Sinners the chief are welcome to complete forgiveness. If only great saints got into heaven, we who are great sinners would lose hope. But when we see Manasseh and men like him going in and getting welcome, there is hope for us. If we follow their steps in repentance, we shall be permitted to join their company in rest. *Arnot.*

#### REIGN OF AMON, TWO YEARS.

*2 Chronicles 33 : 21-25 ; 2 Kings 21 : 19-26.*

The short reign of Amon, the son and successor of Manasseh, was distinguished by only two events: (1) his restoration of all the idolatrous and wicked practices which his father had upheld during the earlier portion of his reign; and (2) his untimely death, in consequence of a conspiracy which was formed against him among the officers of his court. *Hammond.*

The godless portion of the people and of the nobles, by the accession of Amon, were again rendered all-powerful. We learn from *2 Chron.*

*34 : 3* that Josiah, who succeeded Amon, did not begin till the eighth year of his reign to seek God, nor till the twelfth to purge Judah and Jerusalem from idolatry. We thus see that the fourteen years which intervened between the death of Manasseh and the twelfth year of Josiah must have been an evil time. C. G. B.—Judah was fast ripening for judgment under the two kings Manasseh (696-641) and Amon (641-639), who systematically set to work to overthrow the worship of Jehovah, and to establish the undisputed supremacy of idolatry. The conversion of Manasseh seems to have produced no decided effect upon the people, and its good results were all frustrated by Amon. O.

Though his reign lasted but two years, he turned the Temple once more into a high place for Baal, set up an *Asherah* there, re-established the worship of the host of heaven on altars in the two Temple courts, built altars on the upper chamber of Ahaz (*2 K. 23 : 12*), restored the horses of the sun to their position near one of the entrances to the Temple (*ibid.*, verse 11), set up "houses of the Sodomites" close by the house of the Lord (*ibid.*, verse 7), relighted the fires of Tophet in the valley of the children of Hinnom (*ibid.*, verse 10), rebuilt the high places round about Jerusalem and in all the cities of Judah, and caused incense to be burnt on them to the sun and moon and the zodiacal signs, and all the host of heaven (*ibid.*, verse 5), allowed the outbuildings of the Temple to fall into disrepair (*2 K. 22 : 5*), filled Jerusalem with altars and with molten and graven images set up above them (*2 Chron. 34 : 3, 4*), probably renewed the enchantments and the dealings with familiar spirits which Manasseh had first allowed (*2 K. 21 : 6*) and then put down—"in all the way that his father walked in he also walked," and "served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them" (*ibid.*, verse 21), "and humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself" (*2 Chron. 33 : 23*), but persisted in evil, and ever "trespassed more and more" (*ibid.*). The general corruption of the people under the evil influences of Amon's reign seems in no degree to have fallen short of that reached in Manasseh's time. The picture drawn in Zephaniah and in the early chapters of Jeremiah represents this state of corruption, which necessarily continued on into the first years of Josiah (*Zeph.*, chaps. 1, 3; *Jer.*, chaps. 5, 6, 7).

**2 Chron. 24, 25.** A conspiracy was formed against him among his immediate attendants, and they "slew him in his own



house" (2 K. 21 : 23). The murder was certainly not caused by any general dissatisfaction with Amon's idolatrous practices ; for "the people" rose up against his murderers, "and slew all them that had conspired against King Amon," and gave him honorable sepulture in the burial-place which Manasseh had constructed in the palace garden, in the part known as "the garden of Uzzah" (2 K. 21 : 24, 26). Here Amon rested, together with his father, Manasseh ; and here was afterward interred the last king whose body found a sepulchre in Jerusalem, the brave but unfortunate Josiah. If Amon died, as is probable, at the early age of twenty-four, his sins may be to some extent excused by his youth. G. R.

Beware of turning the riches of God's grace

into a snare. As Manasseh's case is recorded in the Bible that an aged sinner desiring to turn may not be cast into despair, Amon's case is recorded beside it that the young may not delay an hour, lest they perish forever. None of us will be saved or lost in consequence of anything in our parents. Amon saw his father born again when he was old, but the son did not inherit his father's goodness. Josiah was the child of an ungodly parent, and yet he became a godly child. These two lessons are plainly written in the history, the one to make the presumptuous humble, the other to give the despairing hope. A converted father cannot secure the safety of an unconverted son ; and an unconverted father cannot drag down a child in his fall if that child follows the Lord. *Arnot.*

## Section 43.

### REIGN OF JOSIAH, THIRTY-ONE YEARS.

2 CHRONICLES 34 : 1-33 ; 35 : 1-27.

**34** : 1 JOSIAH was eight years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned thirty and  
**2** one years in Jerusalem. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the  
**3** left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father : and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the  
**4** molten images. And they brake down the altars of the Baalim in his presence ; and the sun-images, that were on high above them, he hewed down ; and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strowed it upon the graves of  
**5** them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem.  
**6** And so did he in the cities of Manasseh and Ephraim and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, in their ruins round about. And he brake down the altars, and beat the Asherim and the graven images into powder, and hewed down all the sun-images throughout all the land of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem.  
**8** Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to re-  
**9** pair the house of the LORD his God. And they came to Hilkiah the high priest, and

2 KINGS 22 : 1-20 ; 23 : 1-30.

**22** : 1 JOSIAH was eight years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem : and his mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of **2** Adaiah of Bozkath. And he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.  
**3** And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying,  
**4** Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the money which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of  
**5** the door have gathered of the people : and let them deliver it into the hand of the workmen that have the oversight of the house of the LORD : and let them give it to the workmen which are in the house of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the house ;  
**6** unto the carpenters, and to the builders, and to the masons ; and for buying timber and  
**7** hewn stone to repair the house. Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their  
**8** hand ; for they dealt faithfully. And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan, and he read it,  
**9** And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have de-

delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the door, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they delivered it into the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD; and the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD gave it to amend and repair the house; even to the carpenters and to the builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to make beams for the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed. And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them were Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward: and *other of the Levites*, all that could skill of instruments of music. Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and set forward all that did the work in every manner of service: and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters. And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of the LORD given by Moses. And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought the king word again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it. And they have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and into the hand of the workmen. And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read therein before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do according unto all that is written in this book. So Hilkiah, and they whom the king *had commanded*, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter;) and they spake to her to that effect. And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they

livered it into the hand of the workmen that have the oversight of the house of the LORD. 10 And Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. 11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. 12 And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us. So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the second quarter;) and they communed with her. And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell ye the man that sent you unto me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: 17 because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and it shall not be quenched. But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel: As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. 20 Therefore, behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

23: 1 And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and 2 of Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found 3 in the house of the LORD. And the king stood by the pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and all his soul, to confirm the words of this covenant that were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant.

might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands ; therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched. But unto the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel : As touching the words which thou hast heard, because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and hast humbled thyself before me, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me ; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof. And they brought the king word again.

Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small : and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. All his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

35 : 1 And Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem : and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month. And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD. And he said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build ; there shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders : now serve the LORD your God, and his people Israel. And prepare yourselves after your fathers' houses by your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son. And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the children of the people, and let there be for each a portion of a fathers' house of the Levites. And kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare for your brethren, to do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses. And Josiah gave to the children of the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the Asherah, and for all the host of heaven : and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el. And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem ; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. And he brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the common people. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba ; and he brake down the high places of the gates that were at the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.

9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat unleavened bread among their brethren. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the precincts ; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. And the altars that were on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king break down, and beat them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. And he brake in pieces the pillars, and cut down the Asherim, and filled their places with the bones of men. Moreover the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he brake down ; and he burned the high place and stamped it small to powder, and burned the Asherah.

16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount ; and he sent, and took the bones out of the

of them for the passover offerings, unto all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks :  
8 these were of the king's substance. And his princes gave for a freewill offering unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, the rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover offerings two thousand and six hundred *small cattle*, and three hundred  
9 oxen. Conaniah also, and Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brethren, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave unto the Levites for the passover offerings five thousand *small cattle*, and five hundred  
10 oxen. So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites by their courses, according to the  
11 king's commandment. And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled *the blood, which they received* of their hand, and the  
12 Levites flayed them. And they removed the burnt offerings, that they might give them according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of the children of the people, to offer unto the LORD, as it is written in the book of Moses. And so did they with the oxen.  
13 And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance : and the holy offerings sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and carried them quickly to all  
14 the children of the people. And afterward they prepared for themselves, and for the priests ; because the priests the sons of Aaron *were busied* in offering the burnt offerings and the fat until night : therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for  
15 the priests the sons of Aaron. And the singers the sons of Asaph were in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer ; and the porters were at every gate : they needed not to depart from their service, for their brethren the Levites prepared for them. So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according  
17 to the commandment of king Josiah. And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet ; neither did any of the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants  
19 of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.  
20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates : and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? *I come not against thee* this day, but against the house wherewith I have war ; and God hath  
22 commanded me to make haste : forbear thee from *meddling with* God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Neco, from the  
23 mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and defiled it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed,  
17 who proclaimed these things. Then he said, What monument is that which I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el.  
18 And he said, Let him be ; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of  
19 Samaria. And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke *the LORD* to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el. And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there, upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them ; and he returned to Jerusalem.  
21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant. Surely there was not kept such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah ;  
23 but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah was this passover kept to the LORD in Jerusalem. Moreover them that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the teraphim, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest  
25 found in the house of the LORD. And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses ; neither after  
26 him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had  
27 provoked him withal. And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city which I have chosen, even Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of  
29 the kings of Judah? In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates ; and king Josiah went against him ; and he slew  
30 him at Megiddo, when he had seen him. And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

24 Josiah ; and the king said to his servants, Have me away ; for I am sore wounded. So his servants took him out of the chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had, and brought him to Jerusalem ; and he died, and was buried in the sepulchres of his fathers. And  
 25 all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah : and all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations, unto this day ; and they made them an ordinance in Israel : and, behold, they are written in the lamentations.  
 26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds, according to that which is written in  
 27 the law of the Lord, and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

*Substance and Order of the Text and the Events.*

1. General statements, 2 K. 22 : 1, 2 ; 2 Chron. 34 : 1, 2. 2. The reforms in his eighth and twelfth years, 2 Chron. 34 : 3-7. 3. The prophesying of Zephaniah, Zeph. 1 : 1 and the whole book (but other opinions date the book later in Josiah's reign). 4. Earlier prophecies of Jeremiah, Jer. 1 : 2 ; 25 : 3 ; 1 : 4-3 : 5 ; perhaps 8 : 6-6 : 30. 5. The reformation of Josiah's eighteenth year : (a) Temple repairs, 2 K. 22 : 3-7 ; 2 Chron. 34 : 8-13 ; (b) finding the Book of the Law, 2 K. 22 : 8 ; 2 Chron. 34 : 14, 15 ; (c) reading in it before the king, 2 K. 22 : 9-11 ; 2 Chron. 34 : 16-19 ; (d) the prophecy of Huldah, 2 K. 22 : 12-20 ; 2 Chron. 34 : 20-28 ; (e) the public reading and accepting of the Book of the Covenant, 2 K. 23 : 1-3 ; 2 Chron. 34 : 29-32 ; (f) subsequent iconoclastic operations, 2 K. 23 : 4-20, 24, 25 ; 2 Chron. 34 : 33 ; (g) Josiah's passover, 2 K. 23 : 21-23 ; 2 Chron. 35 : 1-19 ; (h) concluding events, and literature, 2 K. 23 : 26-30 ; 2 Chron. 35 : 20-27. . . . *Mention of the times of Josiah in Zephaniah, Jer. 1-6, and Habakkuk. W. J. B.*

*Comparison and Explanation of the Two Accounts in Kings and Chronicles.* The main topic in the Book of Kings is the religious reformation, alike in its positive aspect as regarded the Temple, the law and national religion (2 K. 22 : 3 ; 23 : 3), and in its negative aspect in the abolition of idolatry (2 K. 23 : 4-20). On the other hand, the chronicler records at greatest length, and with fullest detail, the Paschal observance (2 Chron. 35 : 1-19), while he passes very briefly over what might appear as of graver importance (2 Chron. 34 : 4-7). This will explain what otherwise might have seemed a difficulty in the arrangement of the narrative. The account both in the Book of Kings and in Chronicles places the Temple restoration "in the eighteenth year of king Josiah." But in the former the record of the religious reformation begins with this event, while the chronicler prefaces it by a very brief summary of what had previously been done for the abolition of idolatry (2 Chron. 34 : 3-7). That something of this kind must have preceded the restoration of the Temple seems evident. It cannot be supposed that a monarch like Josiah

should for seventeen years have tolerated all that Amon had introduced, and then, in his eighteenth year, suddenly proceeded to the sweeping measures which alike the writers of Kings and of Chronicles narrate. It is, therefore, only reasonable to accept the statement of the latter, that "in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young" (in his sixteenth year—when presumably he commenced personally to administer the government), king Josiah "began to seek after the God of David his father," and that "in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem" from their idolatry (2 Chron. 34 : 3). And then the chronicler, who, as we have stated, makes only briefest reference to the reformation described with such detail in 2 K. 23 : 4-20, at once adds to the mention of the initial measures toward the abolition of idolatry a summary of what was finally done in that direction, after the restoration of the Temple and in consequence of the discovery of the Book of the Law (verses 4-7). It was only natural that such preliminary measures as the chronicler relates should have been followed by, as indeed they must have stood in connection with, the restoration of the Temple and its services. This was done in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign. Nearly two and a half centuries had passed since the former restoration by Joash (2 K. 12 : 4-16), and the sacred building must have greatly suffered under the idolatrous kings, especially during the late reigns of Manasseh and Amon. As the restoration was naturally on the same lines with the previous one under Joash, the two accounts are necessarily similar. The collections for the Temple repairs, to which reference is made, must have begun some years previously (2 K. 22 : 4)—perhaps so early as the eighth year of the king's reign. But what specially interests us is that contributions came not merely from Judah, but from the Israelitish inhabitants of what had been the kingdom of Israel (2 Chron. 34 : 9). This indicates not only a religious movement among them, such as previously in the time of Hezekiah, but that politically also the remnant of Israel in the land was drawn into a hopeful alliance with Judah. A. E.

Josiah, the sixteenth king of Judah, was

eight years old at his accession, and reigned thirty-one years at Jerusalem. His mother was Jedidah, the daughter of Adajah of Boscath. Though he fell in battle before he had completed his fortieth year, he left the brightest name for piety and religious zeal among all the successors of David. He shares with Hezekiah the praise of walking perfectly in the way of his father David. His reign marks the last dying glory of the earthly kingdom of David. It may, indeed, seem mysterious that a doom so often postponed by the repentance and faith of earlier kings should have followed so close upon the reign of the best and most zealous of them all, and that he himself should have fallen by a premature and violent death. But we must look beyond the personal character of the king to the state of the people and their rulers. We have seen that the great reform of Hezekiah was probably superficial; the apostasy under Manasseh and Amon was the last and lowest stage in the long course of national degeneracy; and the deep corruption that prevailed during the minority of Josiah is drawn in the blackest colors by the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah. The very violence of Josiah's reformation indicates the absence of true and spontaneous sympathy among the people. In short, they were past purifying except by the fiercest fires of affliction. P. S.

**2 Chron. 34:1, 2.** *Duration and character of Josiah's reign.* At eight years it began, and continued thirty-one years until his death in battle. This was the sixteenth reign of the separate kingdom of Judah. Again, as in the case of Joash, the providence of God breaks the connection of an evil parentage, so that Josiah comes under other and better influences in the forming age of character. Whence these influences came and what they were we know not, only inferring a good cause from so good an effect. As in the multitude of cases we can trace, it may have been due to a godly mother's wise and faithful training. There were doubtless other devout persons connected with the court or priesthood who seconded this training. "He did that which was *right*, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left." Rectitude or rightness is set forth here and elsewhere by the figure of a straight pathway. Divergence from this on either side is *error*, or wandering; that is, sin, transgression. This divergence is here appropriately characterized as *declension*. Josiah is named with Hezekiah, in association with David, and seems to have been one of the purest and most devout of the Old Testament kings and believers. B.

Josiah was only eight years old when he succeeded to the royal dignity. As his extreme youth would withdraw him from the influences and temptations to which Manasseh had been exposed at his accession, so it must have necessitated the tutorship, or at least guidance, of men to whom, as generally venerated, a royal child would be entrusted. That such there were, we infer from the revival of prophecy, as represented by a Huldah, a Jeremiah and a Zephaniah; from the notices we have of some whom we afterward find surrounding the king; and, lastly, from the bearing of the priesthood under their chief, Hilkiah. Such men as they, under whose auspices afterward the reformation of Josiah was carried out, could have had no difficulty in showing the youthful king how the brightest memories of the royal house of Judah were associated with the names of David, Jehoshaphat and Joash, Uzziah and Hezekiah, and that the times of greatest national prosperity had been those of faithful and earnest allegiance to Jehovah and His service. These are indeed mainly inferences; but they are grounded on the facts of this history, and explain them. A. E.

*Personal Consecration at Sixteen Years of Age.*

2 Chronicles 34:3.

He "began to seek after the God of David, his father." He began amid all the idolatry that surrounded him, and that was still encouraged by the princes and rulers who had the actual conduct of affairs during his minority, to seek after and try to realize communion with the true God of Israel, the God of his father David. In thus setting his heart he may have been encouraged by a certain number of kindred spirits present in Jerusalem at the time—by Hilkiah, the high-priest; by Shaphan, the scribe; by Huldah, the prophetess, wife of Shallum, keeper of the wardrobe; possibly by Zephaniah the prophet, the descendant of Hezekiah, his own cousin. With Jeremiah at this date he is not likely to have had any contact, since Jeremiah dwelt at Anathoth in Benjamin, and did not receive his call till five years afterward, in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (Jer. 1:2; 25:3).

*Reforms in his Twelfth Reigning Year.*

2 Chronicles 34:3-7.

When he had attained the age of twenty, and the actual administration of affairs had devolved upon him, the young king proceeded

to the revival of true religion in its purity throughout the country. His first care was to "purge Judah and Jerusalem"—*i.e.*, to put down, remove and eradicate all the open and flagrant idolatries which his father, Amon, had reintroduced after they had been abolished by Manasseh. G. R.

**6, 7.** *The extent of Josiah's reformation in worship.* Through all the land of the kingdom of Israel, among the remnant still abiding in the nearest tribes of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, and throughout all the territory to the farthest tribe of Naphtali, he carried this work of cleansing. "The abolishment of idolatry in Ephraim involved the destruction of the altar and temple of the golden calf at Bethel, which had been the royal chapel of the kings of Israel (Amos 7 : 13); and this was a remarkable fulfilment of a singular prophecy (cf. 2 K. 22 : 15-18 with 1 K. 13 : 1, 2)." (*Todd.*) His personal connection with the work is indicated by the statement that after it was completed he returned to Jerusalem. The zeal and courage of this youthful king in undertaking and steadily prosecuting a six years' work of purging the land of idolatry can scarcely be overestimated. To appreciate it we must read the strong statements of Jeremiah and Zephaniah concerning the prevalent corruption of the people prior to and during this period. He wrought by faith, and at every step stayed himself on God. His work commenced with the destruction of all the images and the temples of idolatry. Some of the dust of the ground metal-images was strewn upon graves of idolatrous priests, that it might be unfit for further religious use. The bones of the priests taken from graves were burnt upon the idolatrous altars, so that they were rendered unclean. The distinction made between the graves of true worshippers and of idolaters shows that even in such evil times the line which separated the idolater from the believer was distinctly drawn. Each class was known by the character of his worship. As far as possible, Josiah personally supervised and directed this radical work of cleansing. It is said to have been done "in his presence." But with all his efforts to root out the *practice*, he could not extirpate the *spirit* of idolatry. This clung to the people until the Captivity. *That* alone annihilated all desire or thought of idolatrous worship. B.

**6. In the cities of Manasseh, etc.** The power of Assyria being now (B.C. 629-624) greatly weakened, if not completely broken, Josiah, it is evident, asserted and maintained a claim to authority over the whole "land of Is-

rael." It was no longer—as in Hezekiah's time—a tumultuous crowd that, in a fit of enthusiasm, hastily overran a portion of the Israelite country, destroying idolatrous emblems (chap. 31 : 1), but the monarch, who went in person through the length and breadth of the land, and purified the whole region. We must regard Josiah as aiming, not merely at a religious reformation, but at a restoration of the kingdom to its ancient limits. B. C.

The authority of Josiah was acknowledged and his orders fulfilled to the most remote part of Palestine; an apparent proof that, notwithstanding the numbers that had been carried away into the foreign colonies, the Ten Tribes were not so entirely exterminated but that their descendants, at least of the lower orders, were still the predominant population of the country. *Milman.*

*Reformation of Josiah's Eighteenth Reigning Year. Temple Repairs.*

2 *Chronicles* 34 : 8-13; 2 *Kings* 22 : 3-7.

*The Repair of the Temple.* A long period had elapsed since the repairs of Joash—more than two hundred years. The Temple must have greatly needed restoration. It had doubtless suffered much in the reigns of the idolatrous kings. Contributions were received, as had been done under the direction of Joash. A commission was appointed, consisting of three civil officers in conjunction with the high-priest, to keep account of the money contributed, and to disburse it in the execution of the work. In connection with this repair of the house of God, a copy of the Book of the Law was found in the Temple. B.

**2 Chron. 34 : 8.** What stir was there in Judah, wherein God's Temple suffered not? Six several times it was pillaged, whether out of force or will : first, Jehoash, king of Judah, is fain by the spoil of it to stop the mouth of Hazael; then Joash, king of Israel, fills his own hands with that sacred spoil, in the days of Amaziah; after this, Ahaz rifles it for Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria; then Hezekiah is forced to ransack the treasures of it for Sennacherib; yet after, the sacrilege of Manasseh makes that booty of it which his later times endeavored to restore; and lastly, Amon, his son, neglects the frame, embezzles the furniture of this holy place. The very pile began to complain of age and unrespect. Now comes good Josiah, who takes up the latest care of his father David, and gives order for the repairing of the Temple. *Bp. II.*

**Shaphan the scribe.** Shaphan is mentioned frequently by Jeremiah. He was the father of Ahikam, Jeremiah's friend and protector at the court of Jehoiakim (Jer. 26 : 24), and the grandfather of Gedaliah, who was made governor of Judea by the Babylonians after the destruction of Jerusalem (2 K. 25 : 22). Several others of his sons and grandsons were in favor with the later Jewish kings, as Elasah, his son, who was sent on an embassy to Babylon by Zedekiah (Jer. 29 : 3), Gemariah, another son, who tried to induce Jehoiakim not to burn Jeremiah's roll (Jer. 36 : 12, 25), and Michaiah, a grandson, who heard Baruch read the roll and reported its contents to the princes (*ibid.*, 10-12). Shaphan's office was one of great importance, involving very confidential relations with the king. B. C.

**9, 10.** Josiah sanctioned a collection of money for the repairs, not only in the Temple itself, but also throughout Judah and Benjamin, and all the land of Israel. The money gathered was expended in the purchase of hewn stones and timber, and in the payment of carpenters and masons, and bearers of burdens, and overseers of the work, which continued probably over several years, since there was a great deal to be done. From time to time the civil officers who had the general management of the work proceeded to the Temple, and there received from the high-priest such moneys as had been collected since their last visit, which they made over to the superintendents of the workmen, who thereupon paid their wages to the men employed. G. R.

*Finding "the Book of the Law."*

2 *Chronicles* 34 : 14, 15 ; 2 *Kings* 22 : 8.

The high-priest Hilkiah said to Shaphan, "I have found *the Book of Law* in the house of Jehovah." Therefore the book found—*i. e.*, the contents—were not only known to him, but in his opinion must be known to others also. The book was found in the house of Jehovah, where was its natural and designated place (De. 31 : 26). *S. C. Bartlett.*

**2 Chron. 34 : 14.** This took place in connection with the repairs of the Temple. In this verse the word "they" refers to the commission of four chief officers—of the State, the city, the supreme tribunal and the priesthood. While searching the secret places where money was deposited for security during the lawless period of Manasseh's reign, the Book of the Law was found. B.—Its discovery at this time, when the work of repair was going forward,

shows that it had been lost from sight. Possibly, as some suppose, it had been secreted during the idolatrous reign of Manasseh, to protect it from violence and injury, and the place where it had been deposited was forgotten.

**Given by Moses.** Literally, as in the margin, "By the hand of Moses." "By the hand of" simply means that the law was given by the instrumentality of Moses (Lev. 8 : 36). W. H. G.

**15. I have found the book of the law.** Rationalistic criticism has concluded from this discovery, either that no "book of the law" had ever existed before, the work now said to have been "found" having been forged for the occasion by Hilkiah; or, at least, that all knowledge of the old "book," if such book existed, had been lost, and that a work of unknown date and authorship having been at this time found was accepted as the law of Moses on account of its contents, and has thus come down to us under his name. But Hilkiah, the high-priest, having found in the Temple a certain roll and read it, recognizes it with apparent certainty as "*the Book of the Law*"—"The Book of the Law of the Lord by the hand of Moses" (verse 14), and mentions his discovery to Shaphan, who communicates it to the king. Now if Hilkiah had been bold enough and wicked enough to forge, or if he had been foolish enough to accept hastily as the real "Book of the Law" a composition of which he really knew nothing, would there have been no means of detecting his error or his fraud? Four means of detection would, it is evident, have existed: (1) The Jewish liturgies, which embodied large portions of the law, just as the Romish liturgies before the Reformation embodied large portions of the Bible; (2) the memory of living men, which in many instances may have extended to the entire five books, as it does now with the modern Samaritans; (3) other copies, entire or fragmentary, which it cannot but be supposed would exist among the more learned Jews, or, at any rate, in the schools of the prophets; and (4) quotations from the law in other works, as especially in those of the psalmists and prophets, who refer to it almost on every page. On the whole, it may be said that fraud or mistake might as easily have imposed a new "Bible" on the Christian world in the sixteenth century, as a new "law" on the Jews in the reign of Josiah.

**In the house of the Lord.** The copy of the law found by Hilkiah was no doubt that deposited, in accordance with the command of God by Moses (De. 31 : 26), by the side of the



ark of the covenant, and kept ordinarily in the Holy of Holies. It had been lost, or secreted, during the desecration of the Temple by Manasseh, but had not been removed out of the Temple building. B. C.

There had been no wanton destruction of the Book of the Law. It had merely been thrust out of sight, and then forgotten. As the repair and restoration of the Temple proceeded, and even lumber-rooms and closets were searched, that the whole building might be brought into proper order, those employed in the work came upon the lost volume. Priests, king and people unanimously, though with much grief and fear, accepted it. The prophetess, who was God's mouthpiece at the time, confirmed their view; and it remained for nineteenth-century critics to throw a doubt upon the conclusion thus come to, and to brand the work as a forgery of Hilkiah's, or as a *chance* production of a *chance* author, who had amused himself by composing a code of laws for a Utopia. *Illumond.*—The entire statement conveys the impression that a well-known book, after having been for an indefinite period lost from sight, had now been accidentally discovered—a discovery which produced great and immediate, though not permanent results. Now a certain school of critics accept this narrative, but insist that the book thus found was a recent production, which had been hidden in order to be found as it were by accident, and thus create a false impression of its antiquity. But this is playing fast and loose with a historical record. It must be accepted or rejected as a whole. If there was a book found at all, it must have been in the way described. To take one part of the story and discard the other is to violate an established canon of criticism, and especially when this is done to bolster up a theory the most arbitrary and irrational ever conceived. *T. W. Chambers.*—The enormous difficulties attending on the supposition that such an introduction of such a document at such an epoch could have been successful, and the equally enormous difficulty of saving the character of its contrivers, whatever allowance may be made for the diversities of literary conscience in different epochs, may well make us pause before admitting that Jeremiah and the group of devout men and women around him were "liars for God." A. M.

No reasonable motive on the part of the priesthood, still less of the prophets, for the invention of such a book can be conceived. And plainly it must have been accepted and its genuineness attested by Jeremiah, who at that

time had already been five years in the prophetic office. The further question of the precise contents of the book is both difficult of discussion and not of great practical importance. Irrespective of the time which the reading of the whole Pentateuch would have occupied (cf. here 2 K. 23 : 2), the wording of Holy Scripture scarcely conveys in the first instance that the book comprised the strictly historical portions of the Pentateuch (such as Genesis), but, as we expressly read, "the Book of the Covenant" and "the Book of the Law." The latter expression leads us in the present case to think, first of all, of that aspect of the law which specially affected the people, and the breach of which entailed the national judgment that Huldah had announced, and the apprehension of which had caused such consternation to the king. If so, we should perhaps not have to think, in the first place, of those ritual ordinances found in the central portions of the Pentateuch, which are now commonly called the "Priest Code." These would chiefly affect the priesthood, nor perhaps could the people have followed with complete understanding the mere reading of their complicated ritual details. Besides, the previous history has furnished us with sufficient instances to show that, unlike the law, the provisions and ordinances of the "Priest Code" must have been well known. On the other hand, the main contents of the Book of the Law read in hearing of the people must have concerned the whole fundamental relation between Israel and Jehovah. Hence we conclude that it must have contained, besides the Book of Deuteronomy, at any rate those portions of the Pentateuch which related to the same all-important subject. But on the main points we cannot have any hesitation. In De. 31 : 25, 26, we find directions for depositing the Book of the Law in the innermost sanctuary, as indeed might have been expected. That in the various troubles, when during many reigns the Mosaic law and order of worship were so often set aside, "the book" should have been removed and hidden by pious hands, and so for a time have become lost, can as little surprise us as its finding during the thorough repairs of the Temple. And whatever the compass of this special book, the whole context shows, on the one hand, that it implies the embodiment of the Mosaic law in the Pentateuch, and, on the other, that the existence of that law was generally known and universally admitted as primitive, derived from the great Law-giver himself, valid and Divine.

We can now understand how, on hearing

"the words of the Book of the Law," the king had "rent his clothes" and "sent to inquire of the Lord" both concerning himself and his people. For such breach of the covenant and the law, as he now knew Israel to have been guilty of, must involve signal judgment. In the execution of the king's behest, they whom he sent, including the high-priest, addressed themselves to Huldah, "the prophetess," the wife of Shallum, "the keeper of the wardrobe." . . . How far the imagination of even the ablest critics can mislead them appears from the account which Ewald gives of the origin of Deuteronomy. "To all appearance it was written in Egypt" by a fugitive from Judah in the time of Manasseh. "Slowly, and, as it were, accidentally, the book spread into Palestine," where a copy of it "accidentally" got into the Temple "through some priest." In this fashion any kind of history might be constructed to suit the views of any school of "critics." A. E.

A factitious importance has, in recent times, been given to the finding of the Book of the Law by unbelieving critics, who allege that this marks the origin of the law itself, which they claim was never heard of before this time. De Wette, in his earliest production in the beginning of this century, is credited with having invented the notion that Deuteronomy was the Book of the Law found in the Temple, and that it had no existence prior to the reign of Josiah. The Pentateuch was then first completed by the addition of this, its closing book. The most recent school of critics, led by Reuss, Graff and Wellhausen, have gone far beyond this. Accepting De Wette's conclusion that Deuteronomy belongs to the days of Josiah, they maintain that the major portion of the Pentateuch was not even then in existence; but that what we denominate the Priest Code, embracing the whole of Leviticus, together with portions of Exodus and Numbers, was not written until after the Babylonish exile, when it was first brought forward by Ezra, and the people were pledged to obey it.

The allegation is that the Book of Deuteronomy is a pious fraud prepared with good intent by the best men of the nation. They were convinced by the experience of the past that idolatry could not be thoroughly extirpated, and the religion of Jehovah be maintained in its purity, so long as the worship on high places was suffered to remain. It was, they claim, the ancient and, previous to this, the universally approved custom to establish sanctuaries and altars to Jehovah in every part of the land. This had been the usage of the patriarchs, and

no one had ever thought of regarding it as unlawful. But in the sanctuaries remote from the capital and subject to no effective supervision idolatrous emblems came to be introduced, and degrading forms of worship. And the various attempts which had been made to purge out idolatry from the high places, and to rectify the worship celebrated there, proved abortive. They were so numerous and scattered so widely that they could not be kept under proper control. Hence the most enlightened men of the nation, particularly the priests and the prophets, felt it to be necessary to restrict sacrificial worship to one central altar, that of the Temple in Jerusalem; and to accomplish this end the Deuteronomic code was drawn up. To give it the highest sanction and authority, it was prepared in the name of Moses, and in the form of a parting address to the children of Israel just prior to their entrance into Canaan. In order to bring it to the attention of the king, and gain his influence in its favor, Hilkiah, the high-priest, was to represent that it had been found in the Temple while repairs were going forward there. The king sent to Huldah, the prophetess, to inquire about it; but she was in the secret, and gave a response in its favor. Thus the support of the young and impressive king was obtained, and the code was enforced with all the weight of the royal authority.

But this is all a sheer invention of the critics, and has not the slightest foundation in the historical narrative. It is directly in the face of what both Kings and Chronicles explicitly record, which give no suggestion of a plot or a forgery, but simply of the finding of the Book of the Law, which is spoken of as a well-known volume upon the very first mention of it (2 K. 22:8), which their fathers should have obeyed, but did not (verse 13), and which is further called the law of Moses (2 K. 23:25). The charge of forgery against such men as the high-priest and the prophets of the period is gratuitous and preposterous. If the parties concerned had been bad enough to attempt such a fraud, it would have been impracticable. A previously unheard-of body of laws could not be thus suddenly imposed upon a people as one that had been in force ever since the days of Moses; especially if designed, as is alleged, to make an entirely new departure, to forbid what had always been freely practised, and enjoin what had never been required before. Every man in the nation would know that no such law existed before, and that it could not possibly be what it professed to be.

The critical hypothesis of the late date of the Book of Deuteronomy stands opposed to all the evidence, internal and external, by which its Mosaic origin may be established. There is a connected chain of historical testimony to the existence of the Book of the Law reaching back from the days of Josiah to those of Moses. Hezekiah kept the Commandments which the Lord commanded Moses (2 K. 18 : 6). The Ten Tribes did not observe the law which Jehovah commanded their fathers (2 K. 17 : 13), and which is expressly declared to have been a written law (verse 37). The Book of the Law of Moses was obeyed in the reign of Amaziah (2 K. 14 : 6 ; cf. De. 24 : 16). It was transgressed by Jehu (2 K. 10 : 31). It was commended by David to Solomon (1 K. 2 : 3 ; 2 K. 21 : 7, 8). It is spoken of in the time of the judges (Judges 3 : 4). It was possessed by Joshua (Josh. 1 : 7 ; 24 : 26), who solemnly charged Israel to obey it (Josh. 8 : 31 ff. ; 22 : 5). And the law of the unity of the sanctuary (De. 12) is not only that by which Hezekiah was governed in his abolition of high places (2 K. 18 : 4) a century before the finding of the book in the Temple, but it can be shown to have been the law from the time of Israel's first settlement of Canaan. Every departure from it was either a wilful violation of known law, or is capable of satisfactory explanation from the peculiar circumstances of the case. There never was but one ark of the covenant ; the presence of that ark in the sanctuary made it Jehovah's dwelling ; and there could be no other. By a unanimous voice psalmists and prophets uniformly speak of Zion as God's earthly dwelling-place, never of any other. Not a solitary passage can be adduced from any one of them which refers to other places of sacrifice than Zion, except in the language of rebuke and denunciation. The attempt to foist upon different periods of Israel's history a diversity of views in relation to God's true sanctuary is a signal failure. It is in the face of the teaching of every book in the Bible.

And there is abundant evidence of the existence of the ceremonial law long before Josiah. This appears from numerous allusions found in the earliest of the prophets, Hosea and Amos, Micah and Isaiah. It appears also from the history. Solomon's Temple was only a magnified Mosaic tabernacle, after which it was modelled throughout. The horns of the altar (1 K. 1 : 50, 51 ; 2 : 28) imply that its construction corresponded to Ex. 27 : 2. The feast observed on the fifteenth day (1 K. 12 : 32, 33) of the seventh month (1 K. 8 : 2) agrees with Lev. 23 : 34. The gradations in the sacerdotal order of high-

priests (2 K. 12 : 10 ; 22 : 4, 8), priests of the second order (2 K. 23 : 4 ; 25 : 18) and Levites (1 K. 8 : 4), are those of the Levitical law. Unleavened bread was the food of priests (2 K. 23 : 9) ; mention is made of sin offerings and trespass offerings (2 K. 12 : 16), the burnt offerings, meat offerings and peace offerings (1 K. 8 : 64), the daily sacrifice and the sprinkling of the blood (2 K. 16 : 15), and the exclusion of the leper from the ordinary abodes of men (2 K. 15 : 5). W. H. G.

**15.** *The book delivered by Hilkiah to Shaphan, to be carried to the king.* Shaphan, the scribe, was the secretary of the king—not only the custodian, but the reader and interpreter of all written records, sacred and profane, in possession of the monarch. The book belonged properly in the Temple, and was in the care of the priesthood ; but the high-priest sends it to the king, because of the strangeness of its discovery. Probably, also, his purpose was to impress the young king's mind as it *was* impressed by the reading.

*Reading the Book before the King.*

2 Chronicles 34 : 16-19 ; 2 Kings 22 : 9-11.

**16, 17.** *Shaphan first reports the fulfilment of the king's direction.* All that had been committed to their charge had been faithfully executed. The money necessary for the renovation of the Temple had been received and disbursed, and the work of repair completed. As in the previous similar repair by Joash, no accounts had been kept. The money was faithfully expended and the work properly done.

**18.** *He acquaints the king with the discovery by the high-priest of the book, and reads it to him.* The secretary does not inform the king of the contents of the book, but awaits his direction in regard to the reading. This, as we know from Esther, was a custom with the Oriental kings. They were wont to listen to the reading of others, rather than themselves to read. By the king's direction Shaphan read from the book.

**19.** *The instant effect of the reading upon Josiah.* The intensest form of grief or anguish was expressed by the rending of the garments. The fact here stated shows how startling was the impression produced upon the mind of the king by the words of God. The denunciations against idolatry, and the fearful threatenings prophetically uttered by God against this greatest of crimes, joined with his knowledge of the idolatries of the previous generation, would naturally stir the heart of Josiah. The denunciations were uttered against *his* people, and

himself as their representative. He felt his own personal responsibility in connection with this startling revelation. B.—It was because he recognized it as the law of God, which the people were bound to obey, which their fathers should have obeyed but had transgressed (verse 21), that he was so disturbed. The reforms which he had instituted years before (2 Chron. 34 : 3, 4) imply his knowledge of its requirements, with which he sought to comply. W. H. G.

It is hard for us to realize the full force of this discovery. We can scarcely conceive of a state of things in which, during centuries of the nominal establishment of Christianity, the people should still observe solemn festivals at the old sites of Druidical worship; the altars of Thor and Woden and Freya should smoke with sacrifices in every city, town and village; their statues be set up in our cathedrals, and the heights around London should be crowned with the temples of Siva and Juggernaut—all this lasting for centuries, with an occasional and partial return to the purer form of worship, while the Bible, never multiplied by printing, and only known in older and purer times through infrequent readings by the clergy, should have been utterly lost and forgotten. Add to this the supposition that the lost volume contained, not the dark symbols of the Apocalypse, but the clear warning of national destruction and captivity to befall us because of these idolatries, and then let us imagine our feelings on its sudden discovery. No wonder that Josiah rent his clothes, and could not rest till he found a prophet to expound these terrible denunciations. P. S.

Oh, gracious tenderness of Josiah! He doth but once hear the law read, and is thus humbled—humbled for his father's sins, for the sins of his people. How many of us, after a thousand hammerings of the menaces of God's law upon our guilty souls, continue yet insensible of our danger! The very reading of this law doth thus affect him; the preaching of it stirs not us. The sins of others struck thus deep with him; our own are slighted by us. Bp. H.

*The Prophecy of Huldah.*

2 Chronicles 34 : 20–28 ; 2 Kings 22 : 12–20.

**2 Chron. 34 : 20–22.** *The king commands that counsel and direction be sought from the Lord.* He bade the high-priest, with other chief men of the court and Temple, to undertake this service. The chief thought in his

mind concerned not himself, but the remnant of God's people in Israel and Judah. His anxiety was not for himself, nor was his fear for them on account of outward foes. He thought only upon the consequences of such long-protracted and extreme disobedience to Jehovah by His covenanting people. How to avert the wrath of God, and to have those fearful maledictions written in the Book removed and the promised blessings restored, was his great desire, and the main purpose of his inquiry. B.

**21. Concerning the words of the book that is found.** They were not deputed, as has sometimes been represented, to learn whether the book found in the Temple was genuine and was possessed of Divine authority. No doubt is expressed upon that point. The only question was whether God's sparing mercy was now exhausted, and the threatenings which they had read were to be executed without longer delay. **For great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us.** The declarations of the law combined with the calamities which they had already experienced to convince them of the greatness of the Divine displeasure, which had already begun to be visited upon them, and which, it was to be apprehended, would bring upon them still severer inflictions. **Because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah.** The sins of former generations and their own constituted an ever-increasing amount of guilt, which was calling down the Divine judgment upon the nation (Matt. 23 : 34, 35). **To do according unto all that is written in this book.** What is written in this book is here identified with the word of the Lord, and the word which had been possessed though not obeyed by their fathers. W. H. G.

**22. So Hilkiah, and they whom the king had commanded.** The servants of Josiah immediately consulted with Huldah, the prophetess, a widow living in Jerusalem, known to be a recipient of prophetic gifts. The inference is that neither Zephaniah nor Jeremiah were at the time in the capital, and the king's urgency was too great to send to them at a distance. God was wont to speak by women as by men; as certainly, but not as frequently. Other instances we have in Miriam, Deborah and Anna, who seem to have been especially endowed by the Holy Ghost in great emergencies. B.—That such a deputation should have unhesitatingly addressed itself at such a crisis and in a matter so important to a woman, not only indicates the exceptional

position which Huldah occupied in general opinion—by the side of and even above the two other Old Testament prophetesses, Miriam (Ex. 15: 20) and Deborah (Judges 4: 4)—but also casts light on the spiritual relations under the Old Testament, and on the religious conditions of the time. Above all, it shows with what absolute freeness the Spirit of God selected the instruments which He employed in the execution of the Divine behests (cf. Joel 2: 28, 29). A. E.

**23-28.** Huldah's reply reaffirmed in the name of Jehovah the threatenings pronounced against the city and the kingdom. The nation was doomed ultimately to destruction because of its persistence in disobedience and idolatry. But the king received from the prophetess a comforting message. Since he had humbled himself before God, and manifested a sympathy with the people of God by seeking His merciful interposition in their behalf, since as an intercessor he had wept before God, the Lord declared, "I have heard thee." Further, the comforting word was uttered that he should be gathered to his fathers in peace, and not behold the ruin that should come upon the nation. B.

The truth was forced upon Josiah that his great effort at reformation might delay the outbursting of these judgments, might save many individual souls from perdition, but could not permanently arrest the downward proclivity of the masses, could not effectually save the nation. The power of idolatry throughout his kingdom was terrific; the heart of the masses was fearfully saturated with its spirit. He could send abroad his royal mandate, and find a few trusty men to arm with his authority to go forth, levelling heathen groves, crashing down idol-images and altars, burning dead men's bones on all desecrated localities; but the roots of this awful sin would yet remain, and not many years would elapse before the vials of God's wrath would be poured out for sins and abominations that defied all remedy. Thirteen more remained before Josiah's death. So far as can be inferred from the history, he continued to reign in the fear of the Lord to his death. H. C.

**28.** Josiah was the last king of Judah honorably buried in Jerusalem. Two of his three sons, and his grandson, were carried into captivity, and died in the lands of their exile. **In peace.** The death of Josiah *in battle* (chap. 23: 29) is in verbal contradiction to this prophecy, but not in real opposition to its spirit, which is simply that the pious prince who has

sent to inquire of the Lord shall be gathered to his fathers before the troubles come upon the land which are to result in her utter desolation. Now those troubles were to come, not from Egypt, but from Babylon; and their commencement was not the invasion of Necho in B.C. 608, but that of Nebuchadnezzar three years later. Thus was Josiah "taken away from the evil to come," and died "in peace" before his city had suffered attack from the really formidable enemy. B. C.

*Public Reading of the Book and Renewal of Covenant with Jehovah.*

*2 Chronicles 34: 29-32; 2 Kings 23: 1-3.*

Josiah summoned a great meeting, and "recited aloud the whole law from end to end to an immense concourse assembled in the court of the Temple, in which every order of the State, priests and prophets no less than nobles and peasants, heard the (practically) new revelation from the lips of the royal reformer, from his pillar at the entrance of the inner court, beside the sacred laver, himself the new lawgiver of his people." Nor did he deem this enough. The king called on the people to make profession of religion, and to pledge themselves that they would thenceforward "walk after the Lord, and keep His Commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their heart and with all their soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in the book" from which he had read. And then, as one man, "all the people stood to the covenant" (2 K. 23: 3). G. R.

The ignorance of the law which seems now to have prevailed may be sufficiently accounted for from the history of the preceding reigns; for Manasseh had been an idolatrous king for a long series of years, and he wanted neither power nor inclination to destroy the copies of the law, had they been secreted by the servants of the true God. The law, after being so long concealed, would be unknown to very many of the Jews; and thus the solemn reading of it by Josiah would awaken his own and the people's earnest attention. *Kennicott.*—The same words of the law that had wrought upon his heart are by him caused to be publicly read in the ears of Judah and Jerusalem. The assembly is universal, of priests, prophets, people, both small and great; because the sin was such, the danger was such. That no man may complain to want information, the law of God sounds in every ear. *Bp. H.*

*Destruction of Idolatrous Images, Vessels, Charivots, Altars and High Places, and Removal of their Priests and of Wizards, etc.*

2 Chronicles 34 : 33 ; 2 Kings 23 : 4-20, 24, 25.

The whole history leads to the conviction that the reformation inaugurated by Josiah, although submitted to and apparently shared in by the people, was not the outcome of a spiritual revival. It was a movement on the part of the king rather than of the nation. Of this we have only too much confirmation in the account which the prophets give of the moral and religious condition of the people, and of the evidently superficial and chiefly external character of the reformation. And as we derive our knowledge of it from the pages of Jeremiah, we bear in mind that the beginning of his prophetic activity, in the thirteenth year of Josiah (Jer. 1 : 2), synchronized with the commencement of the reformatory movement. Thus we further understand why the changes inaugurated, however extensive, could not avert, as the prophetess Huldah announced, the Divine judgment from the nation, but only from their king. A reformation such as this could be but transient, and the people hastened only the more rapidly to their final apostasy. A. E.

**2 K. 23 : 15-20.** Jerusalem being thus purified, Josiah went to Bethel. He broke down and burned the high place, the altar and the grove, and fulfilled the word of the disobedient prophet by taking the bones of the priests out of the sepulchres and burning them upon the altar, while he spared the remains of the prophet and of the other who was buried with him. The priests who still dared to sacrifice in the high places were put to death, according to the law against idolatry. The wizards and necromancers shared their fate. P. S.

**16. Took the bones out of the sepulchres.** In order to make it surer that the place might not be afterward used as a place of idolatrous worship, he caused the bones of all the men of note, whether priests, prophets or others, who had been promoters of that idolatry, to be dug out of their graves and thrown together upon the place, to pollute it as much as possible and render it odious and contemptible. And thus was that remarkable prophecy pronounced about three hundred and fifty years before concerning this altar (1 K. 13 : 1, 2) now exactly and literally fulfilled. *Pyle.*—The time was, and it was no less than three hundred and fifty years since, that the man of God, out of Judah, cried against Jeroboam's

altar, "O altar, altar ; thus saith the Lord : Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name ; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places, that burn incense upon thee ; and men's bones shall be burned upon thee." And now is the hour come, wherein every of those words shall be accomplished. *Bp. H.*

**20. And he slew all the priests of the high places.** Here again, as in burning the human bones upon the altar at Bethel, Josiah was carrying out prophecy, and may have regarded himself as bound to act as he did (1 K. 13 : 2, 32). Excepting on account of the prophecy, he would scarcely have slain the priests upon the altars. B. C.

**25.** As neither before nor after him was there any king whose heart was so "tender," and who so humbled himself before Jehovah (2 K. 22 : 19), nor yet any who so "turned to Jehovah with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses," so we must surely regard his upraising at that crisis, his bearing, and his rule as of direct Divine grace and interposition. A. E.—**The law of Moses.** It is not very often that the law is expressly called "the law of Moses." The only other instances in the Old Testament are Josh. 8 : 32 ; 2 K. 14 : 6 ; 2 Chron. 23 : 18 ; 25 : 4 ; Ezra 3 : 2 ; Dan. 9 : 11, 13 ; Mal. 4 : 4. These passages are, however, quite numerous enough, and scattered enough, to show a general *consensus* of the Jewish nation upon the subject. B. C.

#### *Josiah's Passover.*

2 Chronicles 35 : 1-19 ; 2 Kings 23 : 21-23.

Returning to Jerusalem in the eighteenth year of his reign (B.C. 622), Josiah kept the passover according to the directions of the newly discovered Book of the Law. This passover was the greatest and the most exact that had been kept since the time of Moses. It is the last great united act of religion in the time preceding the Captivity. P. S.

**2 K. 23 : 21. The king commanded.** The parenthesis which commenced with verse 4 ends with verse 20, and in verse 21 the author returns to the narrative of what was done in Josiah's eighteenth year. Having read the Book of the Law in the ears of all the people, and caused all present to join him in a solemn promise that they would keep all the Commandments written in the Book, Josiah commanded that the ensuing passover should be kept with the greatest strictness and exactness, "as it was

written in the Book of the Covenant." The need of the injunction was owing to the fact—not that Josiah had as yet held no passover, but that the reading of the book had shown him differences between the existing practice and the letter of the law—differences consequent upon negligence, or upon the fact that tradition had been allowed in various points to override the law. B. C.

*Fatal Conflict with Pharaoh-Necho, of Egypt.*

*2 Chronicles 35, 20-25 ; 2 Kings 23 : 29, 30.*

**2 Chron. 35 : 20.** After all this. Thirteen years after, in B.C. 608. For this period Jewish history is an absolute blank, since we can gather nothing certain from Jeremiah. It is not improbable that into this space fell the great invasion of the Scythians, who overran all Western Asia between the years B.C. 633 and B.C. 605, and who certainly came into these parts. Psammetichus, king of Egypt, met them at Ascalon, on the extreme frontier of Philistia toward Egypt (Herod. 2 : 105) ; and in the valley of the Jordan they occupied permanently the old Canaanitish city of Bethshan. Otherwise their raid into Lower Syria seems to have been hasty, and though it must have created great alarm, to have left no permanent impression. **Necho came up to fight against Carchemish.** Rather, "at Carchemish." Necho's object was to engage the Assyrian (or rather the Babylonian) forces, which he expected to find in the vicinity of Carchemish, at this time the chief city of Northern Syria. B. C.

Politically, the time was a stirring one. The great invasion of Western Asia by the Scythic hordes (Herod. i. 103-106), which is alluded to by Jeremiah (6 : 1-5), Ezekiel (38, 39), and perhaps by Zephaniah (2 : 6), probably belongs to it ; as also the attack of Psamatik I. upon Philistia, the fall of the Assyrian empire, and the destruction of Nineveh ; the establishment of the independence of Babylon, and her rise to greatness ; together with the transfer of power in the central part of Western Asia, from the Assyrians to the Medes. Amid the dangers which beset him, Josiah appears to have conducted himself prudently, gradually extending his power over Samaria and Galilee, without coming into hostile collision with any of the neighboring nations, until about the year B.C. 609 or 608, when his land was invaded by Pharaoh-Necho, the Neku of the Egyptian monuments. Josiah felt himself called upon to resist this invasion, and, in doing so, met his death. *Hammond.*

**2 K. 23 : 29. Pharaoh-Necho.** This king is well known to us both from profane historians and from the Egyptian monuments. Named after his grandfather, who was a tributary prince of Lower Egypt under the Assyrians, he succeeded his father, Psammetichus (Psamatik), in the year B.C. 610, and was king of Egypt for sixteen years, from B.C. 610 to 594 (Herod. ii. 159, confirmed by monuments). B. C.

**2 Chron. 35 : 21.** Such references to God—especially in the present circumstances—need not surprise us. Canon Cook gives an almost exactly parallel expression from a Pharaoh of the year 750 B.C. The eastern, in contradistinction to the western mind almost instinctively refers to the direct agency of the Divine Being certain human actions or remarkable events, and such expressions must not be too closely pressed according to our modern notions, nor yet literally understood. A. E.

**22. Valley of Megiddo.** In a nook of the hills, about five miles northwest of Taanach, just on the borders of the plain, are ancient ruins, strewn with large fragments of marble sculptures and granite, on both sides of a little stream, but no modern village or houses. The place bears the name of Lejjun, the Arabic corruption of *Legio*, the Roman name of the *Megiddo* of the Old Testament. There are few spots of greater interest in the old history of Israel. From the brow here we look out upon the great plain of Esdraelon (the Greek corruption of its old name, the plain or "valley of Jezreel"), the great battle-field of Israel. The wide western portion of it may be called the plain of Megiddo. Megiddo was the fortress of the western portion of the plain. From its position it was the point of contact between the Israelites, who relied solely on their infantry, and the Canaanites and subsequent invaders, whose strength was in their cavalry and chariots. Hence it has been taken in the Apocalypse as the figurative name of the place of final conflict between the powers of good and evil, "called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (Rev. 16 : 16)—*i. e.*, "the Mount of Megiddo."

Two of the great battles of Old Testament history occurred in front of Megiddo. The first was when Barak, stirred up by the prophetess Deborah, roused all the northern and central tribes to shake off the yoke of Jabin, king of Canaan. Sisera's nine hundred chariots of iron were mustered in front of Taanach and Megiddo. Barak descended from Tabor, on the opposite side of the plain, and, as a terrific

storm burst upon the Canaanites, fell upon them. The mountain torrents, rapidly swollen, poured down into the Kishon, the river overflowed, and the torrent swept away chariots and horses in hopeless confusion. So "the Lord discomfited Sisera." Very different were the circumstances and the results of the second battle of Megiddo, six hundred and fifty years later. Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, marching against the king of Assyria, came, as it would seem, along the plain of Sharon, and then, rounding Carmel, turned to march up the central plain toward Syria; when Josiah, determined to oppose his progress, met him at Megiddo. Here, exposing himself in his chariot, Josiah was mortally wounded by the Egyptian archers and carried to Jerusalem, where he died, overwhelming his nation in the bitterest grief. The lamentations for Josiah "were made an ordinance in Israel." The battle of Megiddo is mentioned by Herodotus, who speaks of the Jews as Syrians. Josiah was not the first king of Judah to whom Megiddo had been fatal, for here Amaziah died of his wounds when he fled from Jehu (2 K. 9 : 27). *Tristram*. (See Vol. III., pp. 184, 218).

The death of Josiah proved an irremediable disaster to the Jewish State. He left behind him a family torn by jealousies and supported by rival factions, a people hostile to the religious reforms he had carried through, and an army which had lost both its leader and its veterans. From henceforth Judah was no longer able to defend itself from an invader, whether Egyptian or Babylonian; and even the strong walls of Jerusalem no longer proved a defence in days when the method of warfare had changed, and a victorious army was content to sit down for years before a fortress until its defenders had been starved out. Necho's triumph, however, was short-lived. Three years after the battle of Megiddo (B.C. 606), he had to meet the Babylonian army, under its young general Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, at the ford of the Euphrates, which was protected by the old Hittite city of Carchemish. The battle of Carchemish finally decided who should be the master of Western Asia. The Egyptian forces were completely shattered, and Necho retreated with the wreck of his army to his ancestral kingdom. Judah and the countries which adjoined it passed under the yoke of Babylonia. *Sayce*.

**2 Chron. 34 : 24, 25.** Josiah, who in the course of the fight had been wounded by an arrow, was conveyed to Jerusalem in his second chariot (2 Chron. 35 : 24), where he died of

his wound in a short time. Great lamentation was made over him, and he was buried with all due honors in his own sepulchre, near the tombs of Amon and Manasseh. Jeremiah mourned his death in a special elegy, which continued to be sung by professional minstrels of both sexes till long after the return from the Captivity (2 Chron. 35 : 25). G. R.—The result brought deep sorrow upon all his good people. Jeremiah bewailed his noble sovereign and bosom friend with tenderest lamentation—and not without reason. There were graceless sons to succeed their godly father on his throne—not one worthy man among them all. Days of bitter trial and of stinging grief were coming upon Jeremiah, and perhaps, to no small extent, upon those other good men who had wrought in this great reformation. They must breast the fury of this storm—and with no sustaining hope of arresting the near impending doom of their country. H. C.

The prophet Zechariah employs the mourning at Megiddo as a type of the more wholesome sorrow of Judah in the day when God shall pour out upon them the spirit of grace and prayer, as a preparation for His final destruction of all the nations that come up against Jerusalem; and his imagery is adopted in the visions of the Apocalypse. On the very scene of the two most signal defeats of Israel and Judah by their most inveterate enemies, the Philistines and Egypt, the seer beholds the mystic "battle of Armageddon," which avenges all such defeats by the final overthrow of the kings of all the world in the great day of God Almighty.

The reign of Josiah was marked by the revival of *prophecy*, which had long been silent under Manasseh and Amon. To this period belong Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and the greatest of all, Jeremiah. Nahum's splendid prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh seems to have only preceded the event by a short time. The date of Habakkuk, though far from certain, has been placed, upon strong internal evidence, about the twelfth or thirteenth year of Josiah (B.C. 630–629). The title of Zephaniah's prophecy places him in the reign of Josiah; and though it has been inferred from one passage that he wrote after the restoration of Jehovah's worship, his vehement denunciations of the sins that prevailed in Judah seem rather applicable to an earlier period. Jeremiah's long career began in the thirteenth year of Josiah (B.C. 629) with reproaches for sin and warnings of coming judgment, mingled with exhortations and encouragements to repent-



ance, and promises of restoration. Though he is only once mentioned in the history of Josiah's reign, the language of his own book assures us that, both as priest and prophet, he animated the king and people in the work of reformation, and most vigorously denounced the policy of the Egyptian party. His final lamentation for the fate of Josiah must have been doubly embittered by seeing Israel again prostrate beneath her old oppressor. P. S.

**2 K. 23 : 25.** Josiah is perhaps the most blameless of the kings of Judah. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left." "Like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might; neither after him arose there any like him." G. R.

**26. Notwithstanding the Lord turned not.** The great misfortune was that, as to the generality of the court and people, all this seeming reformation was nothing but show and pretence, a mere compliance with the vigor and resolution of their prince; their hearts were never firmly in it; but, as plainly appears by the event, they were ready to revolt again into their old idolatry and vice upon the first opportunity. They complied with Josiah's religion, but their real inclinations were to the old corruptions of Manasseh; for which reason God still resolved to deliver up this part of His chosen people also to the power of a foreign monarch. *Pyle.*—The people had sunk into a condition in which a true repentance was no longer possible. Individuals, like Josiah, were sincere, but the mass of the nation, despite their formal renewal of the covenant and their outward perseverance in Jehovah-worship, had feigned rather than felt repentance. The earlier chapters of Jeremiah are full at once of reproaches which he directs against the people for their insincerity, and of promises if they would repent in earnest. "Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord" (Jer. 3 : 10). B. C.

#### SUGGESTED TRUTHS OF JOSIAH'S HISTORY.

The history of this ancient prince suggests that *one who becomes a Christian early in life is likely to become a better man than one who first lives through a career of sin.* He is likely to be a more consistent Christian. He will probably have fewer faults to get rid of, and fewer habits which his piety must break up. As soon as the young king was old enough to understand

the state of things, he set himself, and his ministers, and his cabinet, and his soldiers, and his workmen, to putting things to rights. He began early, and kept at it, and spent his life in it. We are told that he "covenanted to serve God with all his heart and with all his soul." This is making a *business* of doing right. He started with the very first thing that he had to do, and *did it right*, and in order to please God. Now this is the true way to be a Christian. There is no great mystery about it. There is nothing in it which a child cannot do by the grace of God as well as anybody else. God does not require you to go through any long season of unhappiness, in trying to feel as some others have felt in repenting of sin. You have only to do right in order to please Christ. That is religion, and that is the whole of it. *Phelps.*

*Straightforward* and *Straightway* are two good motto words for the Christian, and especially for the young Christian, as his habits are yet to be formed. He may well mark and fix in mind the meaning of righteousness as here indicated—rightness or rectitude. It is easy to conform to this idea of straightforwardness in conduct in early years; it is more difficult with every added year. Habit is a chain, whose links of thinnest wire at first increase to more than cable thickness at the end. "Since habit is our master," says Bacon, "we should endeavor to form only the best habits."

The *example of Josiah* is one of signal emphasis and force. His piety was not the result of favorable culture, but of his own deliberate choice in early manhood. Every step taken in the successive reforms carried out during his reign was planned and performed by himself. And the zeal, the courage, and the steadfastness of his faith in God, the thorough loyalty to the obligations of his kingly office, which so eminently characterized his youthful career, were maintained to the end of his life. His is one of the few stainless and noble characters in the sacred history.

Other high *advantages of early consecration.*

1. Absence of contaminating contact with evil, so that there is nothing to unlearn or retrace in experience, and nothing to undo in conduct.
2. Life is touched and tintured at the outset and throughout with a freshness, a beauty, and a sweetness which hold it in perpetual youth, and which impart to it such effectiveness and fruitage that its close is peaceful and satisfying.

In the *personal work of cleansing*, all idols of the heart, all selfish aspirations, and all evil

thoughts must be put utterly away. This is our life-work, comparatively easy if early begun, but hard in proportion to the length of time in which self-will and self-seeking have dominion, and to the strength of control which they have obtained over the heart. B.

Josiah must not be regarded as an example of the quiet growth of youthful piety under favorable culture. So evil were the influences about him that he only "began to seek after the God of David his father" in his sixteenth year. His religion was his own decided choice, as the first act of his opening manhood; a choice prompted by that loyalty to his high calling as the son of David, which marks every act of his reign. Doubtless he was aided and encouraged by some among the priests, and by prophets, such as Zephaniah and Jeremiah; but it is a striking feature of his history, that the king himself is the prime mover in every act of reformation. P. S.

The discovery of the Book of the Law reminds us that the true basis of all religious reform is the Word of God. Josiah had begun to restore the Temple, but he did not know how great the task was which he had taken in hand till he heard the law read. That recovered book gave impulse and direction to his efforts. The nearest parallel is the rediscovery of the Bible in the sixteenth century, or, if we may take one incident as a symbol of the whole, Luther's finding the dusty Latin Bible among the neglected convent books. The only reformation of an effete or secularized church is its return to the Bible. A. M.—The Reformation was, in all senses, a resurrection of the Bible; its recovery and restoration as an ancient document; the recognition of its authority as the word of God; the discovery of its meaning as a rule of faith and worship and life, and its new diffusion through the Christian body. The restoration of the Scriptures to their place of power and honor brought with it a revival of true piety scarcely if at all inferior in extent and fervency to that which attended the preaching of the apostles. I. T.

God's providence is seen in nothing more remarkably than in the care He has exercised over the written Word. He has wonderfully protected it through all ages alike from the neglect and the fury of men. If for a time the knowledge of it seemed lost, it was again revived at the most favorable juncture for the execution of His purposes. It was Josiah's zeal in the repairing of the Temple which prepared the way for the discovery here; and the book was found just in time to give a new im-

petus to the reforming movement. In Divine providence, all things fit together in time and place. J. O.

In the loss of the Bible and its fruits we should lose the knowledge of the true God. History proves this beyond reasonable dispute. God must *speak*, or man does not find Him. Mankind needs a book to keep alive in the earth the knowledge of a spiritual and personal God. By the loss of the Scriptures and their results from the knowledge of mankind, we should lose sooner or later our institutions of benevolence. Benevolence on any large scale, and in the form of permanent institutions, and for all classes of mankind is a biblical idea. In the loss of the Bible and its fruits, we should sooner or later suffer the loss of our institutions for popular education. Culture has existed without a revelation from heaven. Schools are not the product of the Bible only. But it is beyond question that popular education is of Bible origin. Other than Christian religions build themselves on the ignorance of the masses. By the loss of the Scriptures and their creations, we should sooner or later part with our institutions of civil liberty. History shows that the great charter of freedom in the world is the word of God. The great free nations of the earth are the great Christian nations. *Phelps.*

God's word is the only agent in humanizing and civilizing mankind. In proportion as it is searched, understood, and obeyed, is human nature lifted up, developed, expanded in all its faculties, purified and ennobled. Even now were the Bible to be destroyed, the nations would be ultimately remitted to barbarism. This is the one supreme lesson of all history, in the Jewish and the Christian dispensations.

The true value and real efficiency of the Bible lies not in the number of copies printed, nor in the extent of their distribution; not in the mere possession, but in the regularity, fidelity and heart-interest with which they are *sought*, and their *truths pondered*. Bless God that you have a Bible, but do not rest complacently, or even gratefully, in the possession. Get the far better, the needful and all-essential blessing of His Spirit's enlightening and impressing influences upon its quickening, sanctifying and helping truths. Thus only will the Bible be a newly found treasure every day. Thus your vision of truth will be widened, its transforming power will be augmented, and its enriching, comforting and delighting influence enhanced.

All who have the Bible and appreciate its

worth and power by experience will seek to put it into every hand that has it not. Nay more, every heart that is in any measure "sanctified through the truth" will pray for a similar effect to be wrought by the Spirit upon all who receive the Word.

*By the Law is the knowledge of sin.* So was it in this case of Josiah. So is it in every other. He frankly met his responsibility when he received the needed knowledge. He felt, and by the symbol of rending his clothes acknowledged and confessed, his own sin, and the sin of his people. In his words and his act of inquiry before God, he virtually repeated the confession and the prayer of David (Ps. 51). B.

If a man will give God's word a fair hearing, and be honest with himself, it will bring him to his knees. No man rightly uses God's law who is not convinced by it of his sin, and impelled to that self-abased sorrow of which the rent royal robes were the passionate expression. Josiah was wise when he did not turn his thoughts to other people's sins, but began with his own, even while he included others. The first function of the law is to arouse the knowledge of sin, as Paul profoundly teaches. Without that penitent knowledge religion is superficial, and reformation merely external. A. M.

Josiah's thought and feeling, and his confession and prayer were for his people as much as himself. All alike had sinned, and all deserved the wrath of God. That wrath he sought to avert from all. And he would have the people join in his conviction of sin, share in his con-

fession of it, and unite in his prayer, that its consequences of wrath might be averted. Herein are clearly indicated old and vital lessons. Sin, personal and national, still brings the same wrath of God. That wrath is averted only and surely by full confession, and by frank and utter trust in the promised and long-illustrated mercy of God. B.

It is remarkable that through the whole of Josiah's long reign—one of the longest in Judean annals—not one wrong thing is recorded of him. Doubtless he had faults, and did wrong things; but not one was important enough to be mentioned in the Bible. The only important mistake recorded of him was that in which he lost his life by fighting with the king of Egypt. Except that one mistake of excessive bravery and patriotism, not a thing is recorded of him that went wrong. *Phelps.*

God never promises anywhere that those who love and fear Him shall be always saved from the consequences of their mistakes. Josiah was mistaken in going out against Pharaoh-Necho. And he sent to urge him not to assail him as an enemy, when he was not at enmity with him. And this warning of the Egyptian king, though he did not know it, was really a warning from God, and is therefore called "the words of Necho from the mouth of God." Josiah did not regard this warning, and God allowed the natural consequences of his own act to take their course. The arrow did not turn aside because Josiah was a servant of Jehovah, but did its deadly work. What God did then, He does now. *Champerns.*

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## Section 44.

REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ, THREE MONTHS. REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM, ELEVEN YEARS. INCIDENTS REPORTED BY JEREMIAH.

2 KINGS 23 : 31-37 ; 24 : 1-7 ; 2 CHRONICLES 36 : 1-8 ; JEREMIAH, CHAPS. 26, 36 and 45.

2 KINGS 23 : 31-37 ; 24 : 1-7.

**23** : 31 JEHOAHAZ was twenty and three years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem : and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter  
32 of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

2 CHRONICLES 36 : 1-8.

1 THEN the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in  
2 his father's stead in Jerusalem. Joahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned three months in  
3 Jerusalem. And the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem, and amerced the land in

33 And Pharaoh-necoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and  
 34 a talent of gold. And Pharaoh-necoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim: but he took Jehoahaz away;  
 35 and he came to Egypt, and died there. And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-necoh.  
 36 Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah  
 37 of Rumah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that

an hundred talents of silver and a talent of  
 4 gold. And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. And Neco took Joahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt.

5 Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his  
 6 God. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them  
 7 in his temple at Babylon. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

24:1 his fathers had done. In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of his servants the prophets.  
 3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his  
 4 sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; and also for the innocent blood that he shed; for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood: and the LORD would not pardon.  
 5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of  
 6 the chronicles of the kings of Judah? So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin  
 7 his son reigned in his stead. And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken, from the brook of Egypt unto the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

## JEREMIAH, CHAPS. 26, 36 and 45.

26:1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, came  
 2 this word from the LORD, saying, Thus saith the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house,  
 3 all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; keep not back a word. It may be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way; that I may repent me of the evil,  
 4 which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD: If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I  
 5 have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I send unto  
 6 you, even rising up early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; then will I make  
 7 this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth. And the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the  
 8 house of the LORD. And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the  
 9 prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.  
 10 And when the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house.  
 11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your  
 12 ears. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God ;  
 14 and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. But as for  
 15 me, behold, I am in your hand : do with me as is good and right in your eyes. Only know  
 ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye shall bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and  
 upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof : for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto  
 16 you to speak all these words in your ears. Then said the princes and all the people unto the  
 priests and to the prophets : This man is not worthy of death ; for he hath spoken to us in  
 17 the name of the LORD our God. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to  
 18 all the assembly of the people, saying, Micaiah the Morashtite prophesied in the days of  
 Hezekiah king of Judah ; and he spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the  
 LORD of hosts : Zion shall be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the  
 19 mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all  
 Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and intreat the favour of the LORD,  
 and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus should  
 20 we commit great evil against our own souls. And there was also a man that prophesied in  
 the name of the LORD, Uriah the son of Shemaiah of Kiriath-jearim ; and he prophesied  
 21 against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah : and when  
 Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king  
 sought to put him to death ; but when Uriah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into  
 22 Egypt : and Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, *namely*, Elnathan the son of Achbor,  
 23 and certain men with him, into Egypt : and they fetched forth Uriah out of Egypt, and  
 brought him unto Jehoiakim the king ; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body  
 24 into the graves of the common people. But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was  
 with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

**36** : 1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah,  
 2 that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and  
 write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah,  
 and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even  
 8 unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to  
 do unto them ; that they may return every man from his evil way ; that I may forgive their  
 4 iniquity and their sin. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah ; and Baruch wrote  
 from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon  
 5 a roll of a book. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up ; I cannot go into  
 6 the house of the LORD : therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from  
 my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD's house upon the  
 fast day : and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.  
 7 It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one  
 from his evil way : for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced  
 8 against this people. And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the  
 prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.  
 9 Now it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the  
 ninth month, that all the people in Jerusalem, and all the people that came from the cities of  
 10 Judah unto Jerusalem, proclaimed a fast before the LORD. Then read Baruch in the book  
 the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of  
 Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in  
 11 the ears of all the people. And when Micaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had  
 12 heard out of the book all the words of the LORD, he went down into the king's house, into  
 the scribe's chamber : and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah  
 the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and  
 13 Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. Then Micaiah declared unto them all the  
 14 words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people. Therefore  
 all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto  
 Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people,  
 15 and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. And  
 they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears.  
 16 Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they turned in fear one toward  
 17 another, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words. And they  
 asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?  
 18 Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I  
 19 wrote them with ink in the book. Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou  
 20 and Jeremiah ; and let no man know where ye be. And they went in to the king into the  
 court ; but they had laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe ; and they told all  
 21 the words in the ears of the king. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll : and he took it  
 out of the chamber of Elishama the scribe. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and  
 22 in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter  
 23 house in the ninth month : and *there was a fire in the brasier burning before him*. And it  
 came to pass, when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, that *the king cut it with the pen-*  
*knife, and cast it into the fire that was in the brasier, until all the roll was consumed in the*  
 24 *fire that was in the brasier*. And they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the  
 25 king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. Moreover Elnathan and Delaiah  
 and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll : but he  
 26 would not hear them. And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king's son, and Seraiah the

son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet : but the LORD hid them.

27 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and  
 28 the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another  
 roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king  
 29 of Judah hath burned. And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah thou shalt say, Thus saith  
 the LORD : Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The  
 king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from  
 30 thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah :  
 He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David : and his dead body shall be cast out in  
 31 the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and  
 his servants for their iniquity ; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jeru-  
 salem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, but  
 32 they hearkened not. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the  
 son of Neriah ; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book  
 which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire : and there were added besides unto  
 them many like words.

45 : 1 The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he  
 wrote these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the  
 2 son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O  
 3 Baruch : Thou didst say, Woe is me now ! for the LORD hath added sorrow to my pain ; I  
 4 am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest. Thus shalt thou say unto him, Thus saith  
 the LORD : Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted  
 5 I will pluck up ; and this in the whole land. And seekest thou great things for thyself?  
 seek them not : for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD : but thy life will  
 I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

#### REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ, THREE MONTHS.

2 Kings 23 : 31-35 ; 2 Chronicles 36 : 1-4.

JEHOAHAZ, three months of B.C. 608. (1) 1 Chron. 3 : 15 ; Jer. 22 : 11, 12 ; 2 K. 23 : 31, 36, his name was originally Shallum. (2) 2 K. 23 : 30-33 ; 2 Chron. 36 : 1-3, the tenure by which he held the throne. (3) 2 K. 23 : 32, character of his reign. W. J. B.

The death of Josiah, in B.C. 608, marks the virtual end of the kingdom of Judah. The four kings who followed him were the mere puppets of Egypt and Babylon, and the twenty-two years of their nominal reigns are occupied with successive conquests and deportations. These twenty-two years are divided into two equal parts by the captivity of Jehoiachin. P. S.

The defeat of the Judean army and the death of Josiah not only put an end to his great reformatory movement, and to the hopes of the possible reunion and recovery of Israel and Judah, but it sounded the knell of Jewish independence. Henceforth Judah was alternately vassal to Egypt or Babylonia. According to 1 Chron. 3 : 15, Josiah had four sons, of whom the eldest, Johanan, seems to have died, either before his father or perhaps in the battle of Megiddo. The other three, arranging them in the order of age, were Eliakim, afterward called Jehoiakim ; Shallum, afterward called Jehoahaz ; and Zedekiah. On the death of Josiah "the people of the land" made and anointed, as his successor, not the eldest royal prince, but his younger brother Shallum, who, on his

accession, assumed the name Jehoahaz, "Jehovah holds up" (cf. 2 K. 23 : 30 with Jer. 22 : 11 and 1 Chron. 3 : 15). From the fate which so speedily overtook him, we may infer that the popular choice of Jehoahaz was largely influenced by his opposition to Egypt. Of his brief reign of three months we only know that "he did the evil in the sight of Jehovah." Meantime, Necho had, after the battle of Megiddo, continued his march toward Syria. Thither at Riblah (the modern Riblah, on the Orontes), "in the land of Hamath," the victor summoned the new Jewish king. On his arrival, Jehoahaz, who had been crowned without the leave of Necho, was put in bonds. Necho does not seem, on this occasion, to have pursued his expedition against Assyria. The great battle at Carchemish, to which the chronicler refers by anticipation (2 Chron. 35 : 20), was fought on a second expedition, three years later, when the Egyptian army under Necho was defeated with great slaughter by Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar. This was after the fall of Nineveh, and when the Babylonian or Chaldean empire had taken the place of the Assyrian. But on the present occasion Necho seems to have returned, before encountering the Assyrians, into Egypt, whither "he brought" with him Jehoahaz, who died in captivity. A. E.

Jehoahaz pleased the popular imagination, which saw in him a "young lion," well trained to "catch the prey" and capable of "devouring men" (Ezek. 19 : 3). The hope was entertained that he would raise the fallen fortunes

of Judea, and recover her glories for her (*ibid.*, verse 5); and when this hope was disappointed by his capture and deportation to Egypt, the regret was excessive. Among others, Jeremiah himself bewailed him. "Weep ye not for the dead," he said—*i.e.*, for Josiah—"neither bemoan him, but weep sore for him that goeth away; for he shall return no more, nor see his native country" (Jer. 22:10). No Jewish prince before him had died in exile; and the prophecy that he should do so touched the nation's heart with a feeling of deep commiseration. G. R.—His brief reign was characterized by wickedness and oppression, but he was lamented as the last king of the people's choice. The fortunes of Jehoahaz and his two successors are described in highly poetical imagery by Ezekiel (19:1-9). P. S.

#### REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM, ELEVEN YEARS.

2 Kings 23:36, 37; 24:1-7; 2 Chronicles 36:5-8.

*Jehoiakim's Accession*, 608 B.C., his "first year" being the year 607 B.C. (2 K. 23:33-36; 2 Chron. 36:3-5). 1. His tenure of the throne. 2. The fine, why levied, and how paid. 3. General character of his reign.

"*The Beginning*" of his Reign, perhaps B.C. 607, 606. 1. Jer. 26:20-23, the prophesying and death of Urijah (by extradition from Egypt). 2. Jer. 26, the trial of Jeremiah for prophesying. 3. Jer. 7-10, fuller text of the prophecies for which he was tried, cf. 7:2 and 26:2: (a) 7:12-15 and 26:6, 9, etc.; 9:11, cf. 26:9, the two specifications of the charge; (b) 26:17-19, the precedent cited in Jeremiah's favor; (c) 26:20-23, the precedent cited against him.

*His Third Year*, B.C. 605, accession year of Nebuchadnezzar (2 K. 24:1; 2 Chron. 36:6, 7; Dan. 1:1-16). Jehoiakim changes masters.

*His Fourth Year*, B.C. 604, the "first" year of Nebuchadnezzar. 1. Jer. 46:1-49:33; 25:1-38, especially verse 13. Jeremiah's written prophecy "concerning the nations;" the great battle of Carchemish. 2. Jer. 45; 36:1-8. Baruch writing Jeremiah's prophecies.

*His Fifth Year*, B.C. 603, Jer. 36:9-32. 1. Burning of Baruch's first roll, and writing of the second. 2. Daniel and his companions, Dan. 1:17-20, graduate from Nebuchadnezzar's training school; Dan. 2, Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

*Remainder of his Reign*, B.C. 602-597. 1. 2 K. 24:1-4, his rebellion and its consequences.

2. Jer. 35, the Rechabites. 3. Jer. 22:1-4, etc., opportunities for repentance. 4. Jer. 52:28, three thousand and twenty-three persons deported in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, the tenth of Jehoiakim. 5. 2 K. 24:6; Jer. 36:30, 31; 22:18, 19, his death, in Jerusalem, by violence, in his eleventh year. W. J. B.

The prophets Zephaniah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah belong to the kingdom of Judah, in the Babylonian period. The characteristics of this period shed much light upon their utterances. It was a time of widespread and increasing corruption. In the face of judgments, the nation is presumptuous in self-confidence and obstinate in sin. False prophets abound and are strong in influence. The true prophets of Jehovah suffer persecution. The Babylonian power, the instrument of the Divine judgment, arises, threatens and at length executes. Judah falls before it, as the kingdom of the north had fallen before Assyria. The prophecy of this period is characterized chiefly by denunciation, yet is not without consolation. For Judah there exists a larger hope than, previously, for Israel. She is not completely apostate, nor is she to disappear finally from history. Moreover, the time is peculiarly ripe for the proclamation of the world-judgment, and in this is found hope for the remnant of Judah. The leading figure of the times is Jeremiah. His ministry was long in duration; the record of it is extensive. The activity of his contemporaries was shorter; their recorded prophecies are brief. Zephaniah emphasizes especially "the day of Jehovah" and its results. His message, strongly positive, is directed principally to Judah. Habakkuk has left us one of the most beautiful books of Hebrew literature. His message is particularly directed against Babylon. Especially does he emphasize abiding faithfulness toward Jehovah. G. S. Burroughs.

With the reign of Jehoiakim began, within the walls of Jerusalem, one of the noblest and most glorious moral contests which the page even of sacred history records. Almost single-handed, for the long period of above twenty years, the gentle and timid Jeremiah stood forth for the Lord in opposition to the united power and fury of the kings, princes and priests of Jerusalem. In his communings with his God we have glimpses of the dreadful expense of personal suffering at which this conflict was maintained by him; but in public, whether in prison or at large, in the palace or in the Temple, we never see him flinch from uttering the stern message committed to him. W. G. B.

*Summaries of Jehoiakim's Reign.*

Jehoiakim, the eighteenth king of Judah, was twenty-five years old when he was placed on the throne by Pharaoh-Necho, instead of his brother Jehoahaz; and he reigned eleven years at Jerusalem, doing evil in the sight of Jehovah. Jeremiah sternly rebukes his injustice and oppression, his cruelty and avarice, and his reckless luxury in building himself a magnificent palace, and contrasts all this with his father's justice to the poor; and in the Chronicles his name is dismissed with an allusion to "all the abominations that he did." From the very commencement of his reign, the voice of Jeremiah is heard plainly predicting, and prefiguring by striking signs, the captivity at Babylon as a judgment rendered inevitable by the people's sins, but adding the promise of their future restoration. In one of these prophecies, after mourning the death of Josiah and the hopeless captivity of Jehoahaz, he predicts the fate of Jehoiakim to the very details of his dishonored end (22:1-23). On another occasion the prophet took his stand in the court of the Temple, amid an assemblage from all the cities of Judah, to proclaim that God would even yet repent Him of the coming evil if they turned to Him, but if not, that His house should be destroyed like the tabernacle at Shiloh, and the city made a curse to all nations. The priests and prophets now resolved on Jeremiah's death; and they had a precedent in the case of Urijah, the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who, having uttered prophecies like those of Jeremiah, had been pursued by the envoys of Jehoiakim into Egypt, and brought back to suffer an ignominious death. The princes of Judah, however, before whom Jeremiah was arraigned, appealed to the better precedent of the times of Hezekiah, who allowed Micah to prophesy with impunity, and Jeremiah's life was saved by the influence of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and other old counsellors of Josiah (Jer. 26). These warnings were given in the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, and their fulfilment was soon begun by the overthrow of his Egyptian protector. P. S.

The armies of Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh-Necho met in the vicinity of Carchemish (now Jerablus), in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, which was the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar, and contended in a great battle, wherein ultimately the Babylonians were victorious. The battle is prophetically, but very graphically, described by the prophet Jeremiah (46:3-12). Jehoiakim was only too

glad to submit, and become Nebuchadnezzar's servant (2 K. 24:1) instead of Necho's, and pay his homage and his tribute to his new sovereign. The kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, probably also those of Tyre and Sidon, did the same. Nebuchadnezzar, however, was prevented from punishing Necho as he desired, or completing his arrangements for the future government of Syria and Palestine, by intelligence which reached him as he was about to ascend the valley of the Nile. His father, Nabopolassar, had succumbed to his weight of years, and died at Babylon, in the twenty-first year of his reign, B.C. 605. Arrived at Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne without difficulty, but the state of affairs seeming to require his presence in the East rather than in the West, he for some time left Syria and Palestine to themselves—a policy sure to result in fresh troubles. A single defeat was not likely to have cowed the possessor of an old and powerful monarchy; and the petty kingdoms of southwestern Asia were almost certain to incline to that one of the two rival empires which was not at the time their master. Necho, under the circumstances, naturally encouraged this disposition, and it was not long before some of the petty kings openly revolted and declared themselves independent of Babylon. Jehoiakim was the first to take the plunge. In the fourth year after his subjugation, B.C. 602, despite the warnings of Jeremiah, he "turned and rebelled against" Nebuchadnezzar (2 K. 24:1). At first the Great King was content to punish him by sending against him a few "bands" of Chaldeans, which, in combination with some of the neighboring nations—as the Syrians, the Moabites, and the Ammonites—plundered and ravaged his territory; but about the year B.C. 598, Ithobal, king of Tyre, having also rebelled, he marched at the head of a large army into Syria. The sieges of Tyre and Jerusalem were formed simultaneously; but, while Tyre resisted with great obstinacy, Jerusalem very soon succumbed. Jehoiakim fell into Nebuchadnezzar's hands, was executed, and received at first "the burial of an ass" (Jer. 22:19); but his remains were afterward collected, and interred in the sepulchre of Manasseh. G. R.

**2 K. 24:1.** The sudden disappearance of *Assyria* from the scene, and the sudden appearance of *Babylon* upon it at this point of the history, are very remarkable. Without a word upon the circumstances that had brought it about, the writer of Kings shows us that a great crisis in the world's history has come and



gone; that the mighty State which had dominated Western Asia for centuries is no more, and has been superseded by a new and hitherto scarce heard of power. "In his [Jehoiakim's] days Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up." Babylon had in remote days (Gen. 10: 8-10) been a powerful State, and had even possessed an empire; but for the last seven hundred years or more she had been content to play a very secondary part in Western Asia, and had generally been either an Assyrian feudatory or an integral part of the Assyrian monarchy. But in the counsels of God it had been long decreed that she, and not Assyria, should be God's instrument for the chastisement of His people. Therefore, as the appointed time for Assyria's fall approached, Babylon was made to increase in power and greatness. A wave of invasion, which passed over the rest of Western Asia, left her untouched. A great monarch was given her in the person of Nabopolassar, who read aright the signs of the times, saw in Media a desirable ally, and, having secured Median co-operation, revolted against the long-established sovereign power. A short, sharp struggle followed, ending in the utter collapse of the great Assyrian empire, and the siege and fall of Nineveh. The two conquering States partitioned between them the Assyrian dominions—Media taking the countries which lay to the northwest and north, Babylon those toward the southwest and south. Thus, so far as the Jews were concerned, Babylon, between B.C. 625 and B.C. 608, had stepped into Assyria's place. She had become "the hammer of the whole earth" (Jer. 50: 23); God's battle-axe and weapons of war (Jer. 51: 20), wherewith He brake in pieces nations and kingdoms, man and woman, old and young, captains and rulers. The prophecy of Isaiah to Hezekiah (chap. 20: 16-19), which seemed so unlikely of fulfilment at the time that it was uttered, found a natural and easy accomplishment, the course of events in the latter part of the seventh century B.C. having transferred to Babylonia, under Divine direction and arrangement, that grand position and dignity which had previously been Assyria's. When she had served God's purpose, Babylon's turn came; and she sank as suddenly as she had risen, because she too had been "proud against the Lord" (Jer. 50: 29), and had provoked His indignation.

*Hammond.*

**2, 3.** The rejection of Judah is again in these verses connected with the sin of Manasseh, only, however, as before shown, because people and rulers made these sins their own,

and would not depart from them. Heathenism was again rampant, and Jehoiakim, like Manasseh, was shedding "innocent blood." Scripture knows no fatalism beyond that which springs from the incorrigibility of a people wedded to their sins. Neither is there any sin which, if sincerely repented of, God will not pardon, though its temporal effects may still have to be endured. But there is the awful possibility of getting beyond pardon through our own obduracy. Both sides of the truth are seen in Jeremiah—on the one hand, exhortations to repentance, with assurances of forgiveness (Jer. 18: 7-10; 26: 1-3; 35: 15); and, on the other, declarations that the time for pardon was past (Jer. 7: 13-16, 27, 28; 11: 11-14; 15: 1; 18: 11, 12; 36: 16, 17, etc.). It was not because the fathers had eaten sour grapes that the children's teeth were set on edge (Ezek. 18: 2); but the children had walked in the fathers' ways. J. O.

**2 Chron. 36: 6, 7.** Nebuchadnezzar advanced to Jerusalem, which he took after a brief siege, dethroned Jehoiakim, and put him in fetters, with a view to carry him to Babylon. For some reason this intention was abandoned, and Jehoiakim was restored to his throne as a vassal. His treasures were carried off to Babylon, where the vessels of the sanctuary were dedicated in the temple of Belus. At the same time Nebuchadnezzar commissioned Ashpenaz, the chief of his eunuchs, to choose a number of royal and noble Hebrew youths, excelling alike in beauty and mental accomplishments, to be brought up at his court and trained in the learning of Chaldea. Among those thus selected were Daniel, with his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. P. S.—Nebuchadnezzar was one of the most mild of all the Assyrian and Babylonian sovereigns. While a skilful warrior, he cared more for building and adorning temples, for beautifying Babylon and for constructing great canals, than for the clash of war. When Jehoiakim submits, Nebuchadnezzar leaves him quietly on the throne. When he revolts, the Babylonian army comes again—"surely at the commandment of Jehovah," writes the historian, "came this upon Judah, to remove them out of His sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did." *Lyon.*

**2 K. 24: 7.** And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land. Necho's two expeditions were enough for him. In the first he was completely successful, defeated Josiah, overran Syria as far as Carchemish, and made Phœnicia, Judea, and

probably the adjacent countries tributary to him. In the second (Jer. 46 : 2-12) he suffered a calamitous reverse, was himself defeated with great slaughter, forced to fly hastily, and to relinquish all his conquests. After this, he

"came not any more out of his land." What ever hopes he held out to Judea or to Tyre, he was not bold enough to challenge the Babylonians to a third trial of strength, but remained peaceably within his own borders. *Hammond.*

#### INCIDENTS OF JEHOIAKIM'S REIGN NARRATED BY JEREMIAH.

The writers of Kings and Chronicles include Jehoiakim's reign of *eleven years in nine and four verses respectively*, only four verses (in Kings) more than Jehoahaz's reign of *three months*. All the detail of Jehoiakim's history we find in the 26th and 36th chapters of Jeremiah, which follow. The 45th chapter is added to complete the story of Baruch. B.

#### JEREMIAH 26 : 1-24.

In the early part of the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah is directed to foretell the destruction of the Temple and city of Jerusalem, without a speedy repentance and reformation (verses 1-6). On this account he is apprehended and accused before the council of a capital offence; he enters on his defence, and is acquitted, his advocates urging the precedent of Micah in the reign of Hezekiah (verses 7-10). But from a contrary precedent it appears that his life would have been in great danger had he not met with a powerful protector. *Blayney.*—This chapter should be read in connection with chaps. 7-9. It is manifest that this chapter is only a renewed mention of the prophecy, drawn out there much more fully, and renewed here for the sake of recording the persecution against Jeremiah, of which that signal prophecy in the Temple was the occasion. H. C.—Read also the messages to the king and people in chap. 25. B.

In the weakness and disorder which characterized this reign, the work of Jeremiah became daily more prominent. The king had come to the throne as the vassal of Egypt, and for a time the Egyptian party was dominant in Jerusalem. Others, however, held that the only way of safety lay in accepting the supremacy of the Chaldeans. Jeremiah appeared as the chief representative of this party. He had learned to discern the signs of the times; the evils of the nation were not to be cured by any half-measures of reform, or by foreign alliances. The king of Babylon was God's servant, doing His work, and was for a time to prevail over all resistance. Hard as it was for one who sympathized so deeply with all the sufferings of his country, this was the conviction to which he had to bring himself. He had to expose himself to the suspicion of treachery by declaring it. Men claiming to be prophets

had their "word of Jehovah" to set against his (14 : 13 ; 23 : 7), and all that he could do was to commit his cause to God, and wait for the result. Some of the most striking scenes in this conflict are brought before us here with great vividness. If Jeremiah was not at once hunted to death, like Urijah (verse 23), it was because his friend Ahikam was powerful enough to protect him. *Dic. B.*

7. The "prophets" here associated with the priests in opposition to Jeremiah were the false prophets—utterly bad men.

9. The verb rendered "took" means, they seized him violently; they made a forcible arrest. The main point of their indictment would be exciting sedition against the government. Very probably they gave it the form of constructive blasphemy, as spoken against the sacred Temple. If the prophet had been without defence and justification, the charge must have been grave and serious.

10. It is noticeable that Jeremiah's friends were among the *princes*, indicating that under the reign of Josiah he had powerful friends at court, stood high with that king, and that some, at least, of those friends still lived, and were in power to befriend him.

11. The priests and prophets now bring the case before these princes and before the people—the latter, as appears here, not being in the prosecution, but rather in the capacity of judges in the case. The priests and the prophets are his persecutors and accusers. There is no intimation thus far, in this chapter, of the part taken by Jehoiakim in this transaction.

12-15. Jeremiah's defence is straightforward, outspoken, fearless and every way appropriate to his circumstances. He pleads, "I have said only what the Lord bade me say, with a special and solemn injunction not to lessen a word of it."

18, 19. This Micah was the same whose prophecies we have. The passage here referred

to is Micah 3:12. This case shows clearly that the writings of the earlier prophets were now in the hands of the people. The example was every way in point. H. C.

**20. Urijah who prophesied.** The process against Jeremiah is finished at the *nineteenth* verse, and the case of Urijah is next brought on, for he was also to be tried for his life; but, hearing of it, he fled to Egypt. He was, however, condemned in his absence; and the king sent to Egypt, and brought him thence and slew him, and caused him to have an ignominious burial (verses 21-23).

**24. The hand of Ahikam was with Jeremiah.** And it was probably by his influence that Jeremiah did not share the same fate with Urijah. Ahikam mentioned here was father of Gedaliah, who, after the capture of Jerusalem, was appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar. A. C.—Both he and his father Shaphan were chief ministers under Josiah (2 K. 22:12, 14). And the brothers of Ahikam, Gemariah, Elasah and Jaazaniah, were considerable men in those days with Ahikam, and members of the great council (chap. 29:3; Ezek. 8:11). So Ahikam made use of his interest with them to deliver Jeremiah from the danger that threatened him. *W. Louth.*

#### JEREMIAH, CHAP. 36.

This chapter belongs to the fourth and fifth years of Jehoiakim (verses 1, 9). The Lord directs Jeremiah to write all his prophecies into one roll or volume. The prophet employs Baruch as his amanuensis; then sends him to read these prophecies before all the people who might convene in the Temple on a day of public fasting. Micaiah heard this public reading, and reported what he heard to the princes. They sent for Baruch to bring the volume and read to them. He did so. They thought the king ought to hear this book, and notified him accordingly. The king sent Jehudi for the book. He brought it, and read a few leaves; whereupon the king took the book from him, cut it up with his penknife and burned it all in the fire. The Lord directs Jeremiah to write out all those prophecies again, which he did, "adding also many like words;" and also announced from the Lord the fearful doom of this impious king. H. C.

The victory of Carchemish (606 or 605 B.C.) was gained by the Babylonian army in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (Jer. 46:2), and it was in the same fourth year of his reign that Jeremiah made Baruch write in a book his

prophetic denunciations of judgment (Jer. 36:1). The conjunction of these two events is deeply significant. What followed can be easily understood. As Nebuchadnezzar advanced toward Palestine (2 K. 24:1), in the fifth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, the Jewish king, in abject fear, proclaimed a national fast (Jer. 36:9). Whether this was done from superstition, or for the sake of popular effect, or else in hope of conciliating the prophet and his adherents, certain it is that the professed repentance was hypocritical. The Book of Jeremiah's prophecies, which Baruch had publicly read on that occasion, was cut in pieces by the king himself, and thrown on the fire (Jer. 36:22, 23). Jeremiah and Baruch only escaped imprisonment, if not death, by timely concealment. Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar appeared in Jerusalem. Jehoiakim, who would be regarded as a vassal of Egypt, was bound in fetters, with the intention of being carried to Babylon. This, however, was not done—perhaps because of the summons which rapidly recalled Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon. But the vessels of the Temple were sent to Babylon, and placed, first in the victor's palace, and then in the temple of his god—probably Belmerodach or Belus. A. E.

**3. It may be that the house of Judah will hear.** In many places God is represented as speaking after the manner of men, and using such methods as in human probability may be most likely to prevail. These and such-like expressions likewise import that God's foreknowledge of future events doth not put any force upon men's will, nor take away the liberty of human actions, as Origen hath acutely observed. *W. Louth.*—The writing of the Scripture is by Divine appointment. And observe the reason here given for the writing of this roll—it may be the house of Judah will hear. Not that the Divine prescience was at any uncertainty concerning the event; with that there is no peradventure. And though God foresaw that they would not hear, He did not tell the prophet so, but prescribed this method to him as a probable one to be used, in the hopes that they would hear—that is, heed and regard what they heard. H.

The preparation of the roll and its reading was the act of Divine love, which plainly tells of evil in order that it may not be forced to inflict evil. That is strongly put in verse 3, which represents God as declaring that the purpose of the roll is that Judah, hearing the evil which He purposes to do to them, may turn from the evil which they have done toward

Him, and that so it may be possible for God to forgive them. No greater proof of God's love can be given than the plainest warning of the certain fall of His judgments. Jehoiakim and his modern successors made a fatal mistake when they fancy that the roll, which tells of punishment, is anything else than a token of love. The retribution is predicted that it may never be experienced; and none would have been so glad as Jeremiah would have been if all his prophecies had remained unfulfilled because they had done their work. None on earth would have been so glad, but there would have been greater gladness in the presence of the angels of heaven, if God's word had returned so blessedly void, having, notwithstanding, accomplished that whereto He had sent it. A. M.

5. It is not said that he was shut up in prison, but barely that he was "shut up," or confined; or, taken in connection with the following context, under some such restraint as precluded him from going to the house of the Lord. This might have been in a variety of ways without being shut up in prison, a species of persecution which does not appear to have befallen him about this time. *Blayney*.

6, 7. The same reason for reading the book before the people appears here as above (verse 3) for writing it. It may be that they will hear, consider, turn to prayer and penitence, and so find mercy.

9, 10. The special occasion of this fast is not stated. It was not the annual Jewish fast, for this was on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:27 and 16:29-31). It was therefore an extraordinary fast, and was probably called by the princes at the instance of the people, for the king does not appear in it at all. The occasion which prompted it was the danger from the Chaldeans, who had utterly broken the Egyptian power a few months before at the great battle of Carchemish on the upper Euphrates (46:2). Hence naturally, as the Jews had been in substantial alliance with the Egyptians, they had reason to fear the Chaldeans. Be this as it may, it was an admirable opportunity for this public reading of the Book of Jeremiah before the assembled people.

11-13. The object of Micaiah seems to have been good. He thought the princes ought to be acquainted with the contents of this volume. He was at this time a young man, his grandfather, Shaphan, having been a very active scribe in the great reformation under Josiah.

17-19. They were inquisitive to know how the book came into existence, and what part

Baruch had in its production. They knew the king so well that they anticipated danger to Jeremiah and Baruch when he should hear the book read; hence their advice of concealment.

20, 21. It is plain they did not think the book altogether safe in the king's hands, so they laid it away carefully in the scribe's chamber. Their plan was first to report its contents to the king, and then await further developments. The king was not content with merely hearing the book reported, but ordered it brought and read before him. The princes were present.

22-26. The ninth month would include part of our December. This fire, as the original word indicates, was burning in a small pot or portable furnace. The "penknife" of those times must be thought of as large enough to sharpen the wooden style used for writing on parchment. The reader will notice the mingled fear and horror of the author, tacitly implied in his surprise that neither the king nor his servants were afraid, nor expressed any indignation at this horrid impiety of the king. He had openly insulted and contemned the Infinite God! Why did not all the princes stand aghast, as if afraid of some sudden outburst of Jehovah's wrath! The king's guilt was the more flagrant because at least three of his princes had besought him not to burn this roll. In every aspect of this king's character we see only consummate hardihood and sin—consummate meanness and guilt. In his indignation against Jeremiah and Baruch, he orders them to be arrested. The Lord had caused them to be secreted from his search. Probably he would then have taken their lives if he could. H. C.

He had not patience to hear it read through, as the princes had, but when he had heard *three or four leaves* read, in a rage he *cut it with his penknife* and threw it piece by piece *into the fire*, that he might be sure to see it all *consumed* (verses 22, 23). This was a piece of as daring impiety as a man could lightly be guilty of, and a most impudent affront to the God of heaven, whose message this was. Thus he showed his impatience of reproof; being resolved to persist in sin, he would by no means bear to be told of his faults. Thus he showed his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah; he would have cut them in pieces and burned them, if he had had them in his reach when he was in this passion. Thus he expressed an obstinate resolution never to comply with the designs and intentions of the warnings given him; he will do what he will, whatever God by His prophets says to the contrary. Thus he

foolishly hoped to defeat the threatenings denounced against him ; as if God knew not how to execute the sentence when the roll was gone in which it was written. H.

Jehoiakim with his penknife and brazier has no lack of imitators to-day. There are plenty of people who try to cut out of Scripture all the bits that pinch them, or threaten evil consequences to sinful men. What is the modern craving for a revelation which has no word about the "wrath of God," but this foolish king's act in modern guise? Here is some stern saying which warns sinners that sin is death. Out with the penknife, and into the brazier with the "narrow-minded, ferocious" words! Cut out every verse that speaks of punishment, and leave us only the teachings that God is very good-natured, and that everybody is on the right road. If we strike out retributive justice from the character of God, the love that is left is only weak indulgence, and His whole character is weakened and lowered. A. M.

From our later standpoint it is easy to see that Jehoiakim might have known better. God never leaves a sinner without warning ; only the sinner himself never sees that he is a fool. The northern kingdom of Israel had fallen a century before from causes similar to those which were now undermining Israel. The history of Judah itself, even during the reigns of good Hezekiah and Josiah, might have warned him against the worthlessness of heathen alliances. Even Jehoiakim's own experience ought to have been enough. Had he not been a creature of Pharaoh-Necho? Is he not still a sort of vassal of Nebuchadnezzar? But sin is such an infatuation that he only made a mock at it. Originally selfish, as all men are, he had allowed his heart to become hard. Habit had acquired weight in the wrong scale, and had here so crystallized into bad character that he could neither see the truth nor choose the right. The love of consistency and the inertia of character of course compelled him to moral suicide at last. As the Spanish proverb has it : "Sow an act, reap a habit ; sow a habit, reap character ;" sow character, reap destiny. The only salvation for Jehoiakim would have been by listening to the prophet, to transfer the pivot of his life from his own depraved will to the holy will of God—conversion. But that he would not do. Consequently he domineered over his princes and his servants. He tried to capture God's messengers, probably to kill them. Worst of all, he raised a fatal controversy with God Himself.

Is it not strange that sinners cannot foresee the inevitable end of such a conflict? In this decisive particular, Jehoiakim is not exceptional, but representative. Every sinner does the same thing, in his own way, and with the same result. Jehoiakim was against the roll, and against God and His prophet, because they were all against him. They rebuked his sin and folly. How foolish sinners are, and how futile sin ! They hack God's word to bits, as though Baruch could write no more, nor Jeremiah dictate what the Holy Spirit breathed, nor Jehovah remember His own will ! Sinners thus reject what is meant for their good, and they find eventually that the revelation is renewed and made more full and specific, and that its predicted decrees shall be enforced. Jeremiah and Jehoiakim alike found that the word of the Lord is indestructible, and abideth forever ; the one to his glory and joy, the other to his shame and everlasting contempt. We are still under the same sovereign and gracious government ; and one or the other of their opposite destinies foretells our own. *M'Pherson.*

**32. Another roll . . . wrote therein all the words . . . added many besides.** And this was all that Jehoiakim got by burning the prophecy of Jeremiah. When Jeremiah and Baruch wrote the second roll, they were directed by God to add to it several things which were not in the former—aggravations, no doubt, of Jehoiakim's punishment for his impious burning of the first roll. And very just it was that his doom should be aggravated. For if every abuse of temporal blessings shall be imputed, as certainly it shall, to wicked men to augment their reckoning at the last day, much less shall spiritual wantonness and intemperance be overlooked and escape such imputation. *Reading.*—So is it always. God's word is indestructible. You may burn it and its present preachers, but it and they will be followed by a larger roll and mightier successors. As John Huss said, "You may burn a goose ["Huss" means "goose"], but from his ashes will come a swan." Martin Luther fulfilled that prophecy. "It is John, whom I beheaded : he is risen from the dead," said Herod ; and his forebodings were right in substance. Every word of God is indestructible, and the attempt to destroy any fragment of its threatenings only ensures a resurrection of these with added weight and power. A. M.

*Jeremiah, Chapter 45.*

These few words are for Baruch, who has been already before us as the faithful friend,

attendant, and amanuensis of the prophet. The date is that remarkable fourth year of Jehoiakim, when (see chap. 36) Baruch wrote out the first complete copy of Jeremiah's prophecies, and was directed by the prophet to read it in the Temple before all the people. If we follow closely the dates as given in this chapter and in chapter 36, we must conclude that Baruch had written out this first complete copy, and had also probably received his commission to go, on the ensuing fast-day and read it to the people, but had not yet gone when this message came for him, in good time to prepare him for the trial through which he was soon to pass. H. C.

The failure of this last appeal to king and people can scarcely have surprised Jeremiah, but it had a deep effect on his more youthful and ardent disciple. Baruch seems to have hoped that, amid the solemnity of the fast, the people would have been stirred up by his words to a movement of new national and religious life, and Jeremiah addresses him in words fitted to chasten the despair of the too sanguine patriot. He reminds him of God's sovereign right to break down what He had built, and to pluck up what He had planted, and adds: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith Jehovah: but *thy life* will I give thee for a prey"—as if snatched from the net of the destroyer—"in all places whither thou goest." The promise was fulfilled by Baruch's sharing with Jeremiah the protection of Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem was taken, and by his afterward finding a refuge in Egypt with the remnant of the Jews. P. S.

Jeremiah had already passed through several seasons of stern mental conflict and purifying discipline; Baruch had them yet to pass. This was one of his first lessons: "Forego all your schemes of personal good. As for yourself alone, be content with your bare life as the best God can give; and having the assurance of life, make every sacrifice to which God may call you most cheerfully. If you can do anything for the truth of God; anything to bear testimony against the sins of your countrymen; anything to lessen the labors and lighten the griefs of the patriarchal prophet under whose shadow you walk, do it cheerfully, and even gladly. But dismiss forever all aspirations after great things for yourself." It is pleasant to think of Jeremiah as having thoroughly sounded the depths of this counsel and drank in its spirit. He had ample occasion to

act upon it subsequently; arrested by the savage Jehoiakim and some of his kindred spirits; cast into dungeons, darkness and mire; starved, tortured, and in peril of his life; kept in confinement months and years during the reign of Zedekiah; yet still charged with successive messages more and more severe and terrible to the king on his throne, and to his princes inflated with pride. H. C.

"Seekest thou great things for thyself?" said the prophet; "*seek them not.*" Why? Because there is no greatness in *things*. The only greatness is unselfish love. Even self-denial in itself is nothing, is almost a mistake. Only a great purpose or a mightier love can justify the waste. *H. Drummond.*—He only is great of heart who floods the world with a great affection. He only is great of mind who stirs the world with great thoughts. He only is great of will who does something to shape the world to a great career. And he is greatest who does the most of all these things, and does them best. *R. D. Hitchcock.*

Greatness is not a teachable nor gainable thing, but the expression of the mind of a God-made great man; teach or preach, or labor as you will, everlasting difference is set between one man's capacity and another's, and this God-given supremacy is the priceless thing, always just as rare in the world at one time as another. What you can manufacture or communicate you can lower the price of; but this mental supremacy is incommunicable; you will never multiply its quantity, nor lower its price; and nearly the best thing men can generally do is to set themselves not to the attainment, but the discovery of this: learning to know gold when we see it from iron-glace, and diamonds from flint-sand, being for most of us a more profitable employment than trying to make diamonds out of our own charcoal. *Ruskin.*

A magnanimous spirit is a spirit to bear and to do great things; to bear trials with fortitude; to control the temper under great provocations, and even to throw a benignant smile upon the face of a foe; to yield ingenious sympathy to those who are not of us, and rejoice in their success; to carry out convictions of duty at the sacrifice of interests; to forget self in the cause of God and of humanity; to brave with a constant heart the greatest perils for the sake of great principles and the common good. *Homilist.*—Nothing but the practical habit of overcoming our own selfishness, and of familiarly encountering privations and discomfort on account of others, will ever enable us to do it when required. And therefore I am

firmly persuaded that indulgence infallibly produces selfishness and hardness of heart, and that nothing but a pretty severe discipline and control can lay the foundation of a magnanimous character. *Lord Jeffrey*.—In the final analysis, self-worship is, at the root of human misery. Self-love is the virus of melancholy. In a man of genius it breeds egotism; in a religious nature, Pharisaism; in an invalid, a desire to suffer before the looking-glass. No man can be happy who loves himself better than his neighbor. Health and wealth do not insure happiness when a devouring egotism is feeding on the heart. The most dazzling success, which carries its votary to the summit of power, has its Nemesis in a strange satiety and loathing of life. *Van Santvoord*.

The lowliest and the humblest in endowments is just as important in his place as the most brilliantly gifted. The great life in God's sight is not the conspicuous one, but the life that fills the place which it was made to fill and does the work which it was made to do. God asks not great things; He asks only simple faithfulness, the quiet doing of what He allots. His design for each life is that it shall reach a holy character, do a good work in the world, fill a worthy place, however humble, and fill it well, so as to honor God and bless the world. *J. R. Miller*.

In the presence of great ambitions, what do men care for viewless prizes in invisible worlds? Men do not let the dust around them settle long enough to disclose eternal things. Notice the precise attitude of the man of the world to religious things. He does not deny them. That would imply consideration, and he does not consider. He simply ignores. He may get glimpses of them. But heaven never gives a man an instantaneous photograph. He cannot take it on the wing. He must pause a little. The indifference that comes from insensitiveness is the hardest to overcome. Light works at a disadvantage when it appeals to defective vision. Truth works at a similar disadvantage when it takes hold of faculties that are partly benumbed, whether that comes from misuse or lack of use. Hardness of heart stands for a common fact. There are people to whom religion no longer appeals. It does not find them. There are multitudes of people with whom an argument is useless. There is no use preaching to them. They are encased. They are proof against proof. The intellectual approach to them is barred. In such cases there is yet one door—the door of a good example. If men turn from preaching they may yet be

reached by an appeal to the heart, and that comes cogently only on the path of an experience. Apologetics must get out of books. Men care little for the formal arguments. A great life was lived once, and the world bows to it as the unanswerable argument for Heaven. *Interior*.

**For thyself.** All forms of sin are ultimately resolvable into the principle of selfishness. What is *worldliness*, whether as covetousness or sensuality, but the aim of a being who has lost the infinite good to substitute and appropriate the finite? *Hypocrisy* is the mask he wears to conceal his aim; *anger* and *impatience* the results of impediment and disappointment; *envy* and *malice* the emotions excited at the superiority or the success of others; and *hatred* and *cruelty* the reaction of thwarted self-will. *Ambition* is an attempt at lofty self-isolation; *pride* the feeling that we have achieved, or can achieve, such distinction; and *despondency* and *moroseness* the offspring of disappointed desire. Detached from God, man's relation to every other object is false; he himself is a moral falsehood; and every *breach of veracity* is but a particular form of the great falsehood. Living out of harmony with God and with himself, *variance* with his fellow-man follows of course. *Lawlessness* of every kind is but the result of man's attempting to be a law to and by himself. All human governments are still occupied in reconciling law and liberty—in restraining the fierce *collisions* of human wills. And "whence come *wars* and *fightings* among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust and have not; ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lust." *Impenitence* is self-satisfaction unwilling to submit to God; the choice to remain at variance with Him. *Unreasonableness* is self-will substituted for reason and conscience. And *unbelief* is self-trust as opposed to trust in God.

"But is not self-love of moral obligation?" Undeniably: it is to be the measure of our love to others. But the ground of the obligation to love ourselves is the same as that on which we are required to love our fellow-man—our relation to God. My moral worth consists in my having been made in the image of God, capable of entering into His plans, and of sharing in His glory. But if God be lost from my soul, I cannot be said strictly to love my integral and proper self, but only the ungodly remains of myself. The act is essentially different in *kind*, for it is directed toward an essentially different

*object.* A moral element is wanting in the love answering to the element wanting in the object. It is the idolatry of a self from which God is absent. An object of self-compassion I may rightly be ; but this implies a desire of self-restoration, and of restoration to God. And it is only as I "lose myself," surrender my self-predominance, and welcome God back again to His throne within, that my regard for myself can be morally good. *J. Harris.*

*Arrangement of Jeremiah's Prophecies.*

The arrangement of the several prophecies with so very little apparent method and chronological order is accounted for by the circumstances narrated in this chapter. 'It was to both Baruch and Jeremiah a season of extreme peril. Now they are flying to escape arrest, and perhaps immediate death ; anon they are imprisoned. Next the prophet is tortured, and at length hurried from his country to take his lot with the poor exiles who fled into Egypt.

So far as is known to us, no other book of prophecies in the Bible was compiled under circumstances so unfavorable to method and order. Certainly no other one exhibits such a lack of these qualities. The book and the condition of the men who made it are remarkably correlated to each other, a fact which goes strongly to confirm its genuineness. It is what ought to be expected from the circumstances under which it was compiled. . . . His book is valuable to us almost exclusively for its *great moral lessons.* These are above rubies. Here we see delineated the full administration of God's government not over Judah alone, but all the prominent nations of Western Asia. It also reveals God in His relations to His Church and people : how He dealt with them, how He felt toward them, how He made the very tears of His prophet witness to His own tenderness of heart, with what severity He denounces their sins, with what patience He bore with their long-continued abuse. H. C.

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## Section 45.

### STORY OF THE RECHABITES, AND ITS LESSONS DIVINELY INTERPRETED.

#### JEREMIAH 35 : 1-19.

1 THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of  
 2 Josiah, king of Judah, saying, Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them,  
 and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to  
 3 drink. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brethren,  
 4 and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites ; and I brought them into the  
 house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man  
 of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of  
 5 Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door : and I set before the sons of the  
 house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink  
 6 ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine : for Jonadab the son of Rechab our  
 father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for  
 7 ever : neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any : but  
 all your days ye shall dwell in tents ; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye  
 8 sojourn. And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that  
 he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters ;  
 9, 10 nor to build houses for us to dwell in : neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed : but we  
 have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father  
 11 commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into  
 the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chal-  
 deans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians ; so we dwell at Jerusalem.  
 12, 13 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts,  
 the God of Israel : Go, and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will  
 14 ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words ? saith the LORD. The words of Jonadab



the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons, not to drink wine, are performed, and unto this day they drink none, for they obey their father's commandment : but I have spoken  
 15 unto you, rising up early and speaking ; and ye have not hearkened unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to  
 16 your fathers : but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. Forasmuch as the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father which  
 17 he commanded them, but this people hath not hearkened unto me ; therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel : Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them : because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard ; and I have called unto them, but they  
 18 have not answered. And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he commanded you ;  
 19 therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

**1-17.** It was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign that this word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah. Nebuchadnezzar had invaded and devastated Judah, sent away many of its people (among them the youthful Daniel) to Babylon, and spoiled the Temple of its sacred vessels. Only Jerusalem itself was spared and those who had gathered within its walls. Among the latter were the descendants of Jonadab, the son of Rechab. They had temporarily left their tents and flocks in the fields, and sought protection within the defences of the capital. B.

There was a remarkable people whose presence in Jerusalem, to which they had repaired for refuge on the approach of the Chaldean army, in the time of King Jehoiakim, afforded to the prophet Jeremiah an occasion, of which he was directed to avail himself, of administering a significant rebuke to the Israelites. These were the Rechabites, of whom we seem to learn from 1 Chron. 2 : 55, that they were identical with or a branch of the Kenites, who were of the family of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, and came with the Israelites into Palestine and there continued to lead their former mode of life, as in the instance of Heber the Kenite (Judges 4 : 11). When, therefore, we are told that Jonadab, the son (descendant) of Rechab, imposed upon this family the obligation never to build houses, but always to dwell in tents ; and never to sow corn, or cultivate vineyards, or to drink wine, he did not impose upon them any new law of life, but bound them to the conservation of their then existing and ancient usages. All these, in fact, except the last, are such as belong to this form of life ; and the last also now belongs to it among all the tribes of like habit in Western

Asia, wine being forbidden to them as to other Moslems. *Kitto.*

Their great chieftain, Jonadab, had lived in the days of Jehu. He had been a zealous supporter of the true worship ; and had actively aided Jehu in the destruction of the false prophets and of the iniquitous worship of Baal. Fearing for the morals of his own tribe from the universal dissoluteness that then prevailed in Israel, and rightly discerning in the luxurious living of the cities, especially indulgence in the intoxicating cup, the chief points of peril, he sought to counteract these evil influences. He therefore commanded his sons, and persuaded them to bind themselves and their children, not to congregate in cities nor to build houses, but to live in tents and to subsist by pasturage ; and further, to abstain utterly from the use of wine. And now for nearly three hundred years this command had been obeyed, the pledge faithfully kept. For successive generations the descendants of this wise tribal chief had continued to live a comparatively pure, because a simple pastoral life, afar from the temptations of the crowded city.

Introduced into Jerusalem in the existing emergency, the temperate habits of these simple friendly shepherds of a foreign race were now visible to all the native Jews. Their still continued obedience to the law of abstinence prescribed by their ancestor Jonadab further distinguished them from the people of the beleaguered city. And it was the marvellous force of this long and signal example of obedience, now brought afresh before the very eyes of the persistently transgressing inhabitants of Jerusalem, that God now uses to point His stern rebuke and threatening.

By God's command, the prophet openly im-

poses upon these Rechabites a definite test of their principles. They are formally gathered in one of the chambers of the Temple, large pots of wine and cups are set before them, and they are bidden to drink. But with courteous firmness they decline. And it is in direct connection with their touching reply (which should be very carefully read, verses 6-11) that Jeremiah is bidden to go forth with them into the great court of the Temple and utter God's rebuking message to the inhabitants there assembled.

The substance of the rebuke consists in the *contrast* between these Rechabites and the people of Judah respecting the single matter of *obedience*. In the comparison, however, as stated or implied, were several points which greatly aggravated the contrast. And these are to be well heeded if we would understand the full force of God's rebuke.

On the one hand, these descendants of Rechab were not Israelites. Of a race whose fathers had been excluded from their original occupancy of Canaan in favor of the incoming tribes of Jacob, they yet had submitted to the Israelites, had voluntarily sought the knowledge and favor of Jehovah, and conformed to His established worship. Furthermore—in this matter of Jonadab's command—he had simply spoken, manifested his wish, and laid it as an obligation upon his sons and descendants. He had spoken but once. His command had no accompanying promise. It was based upon no other ground than its inherent wisdom, enforced by no other appeal than its manifestly beneficent spirit and effects. But it had been filially honored and implicitly obeyed. Neither self-will nor self-indulgence had once arisen, in that long period among those successive generations, to question the wisdom or beneficence of the stringent ordinance left by their great chieftain Jonadab. And the more we ponder this filial loyalty of nearly three centuries the more signal and striking the lesson it conveys to us; the more worthy seems to be the use which God Himself condescends to make of it here; and the higher our estimate of its intrinsic force in this Divine application, by the mouth of Jeremiah.

On the other hand, it was upon His own chosen richly favored people that Jehovah's commands were laid. To them He had spoken, not once or twice, but repeatedly and by many messengers, by providences and by prophets to every generation. He pictures Himself here as having patiently toiled, from the earliest morning hour, through the entire day, of many

generations. In this toil He had employed not only terms of command and persuasion, but had exhausted every form of entreaty and warning. Promises too, rich and full beyond conception, had been multiplied in words, and illustrated in deliverances and mercies without number. But with all these urgencies of Divine influence, they had refused to hearken and to obey.

Recall now, in connection with these facts, that sharply aggravate the contrast, the two chief points of that contrast itself, as contained in God's rebuking words. In these we find the emphatic suggestions of the story. The first is *obedience*, as set against *disobedience*; the second, *filial* obedience, as set against *filial* disobedience. The Rechabites *obeyed their father*, Jonadab; the Israelites *disobeyed their Father*, God. It is specially observable how God here emphasizes His Fatherly relation. To us Fatherhood is a fundamental element of His character. Childship is the supreme vital relation we hold to Him. This responsive connection is the beautiful suggestion which He makes in using this comparison. B.

**6-10.** It is a dull ear which does not catch in these words an echo, as from the rocks of Sinai, of the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Eminent examples of filial piety, how might that law have been inscribed, as their appropriate motto, on the banners of the house of Rechab? Living in remarkable accordance with its precept, they were a remarkable monument to the truth of its promise. Distinguished from all around them by their superior respect for parental authority, they were equally distinguished by their happier fortune; while others perished, their days were long upon the land which the Lord their God had given them. That law is one of the Ten which, written by God's own finger, and spoken in thunder tones by His own awful voice, were separated and distinguished from those Mosaic ordinances, the shadows of good things to come, that were buried in the grave of Christ. Like the other nine it was fulfilled, not interred by the Redeemer. Like all other parts of the Decalogue, it is of permanent authority; and God is still making good its promise in the well-doing, the health and wealth, and prosperity of thousands who honored their parents however humble they might be, cherished them, and yielded to father and mother the reverence that was their due. *Guthrie*.

**12-15.** The strong point which the Lord

makes upon this noble example is, that this tribe had adhered with unswerving constancy through so many years to the precepts of their father Jonadab, the son of Rechab, while the Jews had utterly refused to adhere to His precepts; would not listen to His repeated messages and warnings, but spurned them madly away. *They heard and obeyed a mortal man; this people will not hear and obey the eternal God!* H. C.

**14. I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking.** God had spoken to them early and late. The figure is taken from men who address themselves early to that in which they take a deep interest, and to which they devote themselves strenuously. It is a favorite phrase with Jeremiah (7:13, 25; 11:7; 25:3, 4; 26:5, etc.).

**15.** It is here explained how God had spoken to them, as had been said in the preceding verse. It was by the instrumentality of His servants the prophets, whom He employed as His messengers. What they spoke was God Himself speaking. While the Rechabites obeyed their ancestor, Judah did not obey God. A single requirement sufficed for the Rechabites; frequent repetition did not secure Judah's compliance. A fresh contrast is suggested by what immediately follows. Jonadab's commandment was a purely arbitrary one; God commands that which is in itself of the highest moral obligation. **Return ye now every man from his evil way.** Repentance of and forsaking all that is sinful is the first step required. This negative abandonment of evil must be followed by positively doing what is right. **Amend your doings.** And, inasmuch as the only effectual spring of repentance and good works is to be found in communion with God and right affections toward Him, it is added, *go not after other gods to serve them*: He will not admit a rival, or permit that homage and service to be given to another which is due to Him alone. A further contrast between Jonadab's word to the Rechabites and God's word to Judah is that the latter was accompanied by a promise such as the former could not make. This is that, if obedient, *ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you*: If faithful to the Lord, they had the assurance of His Divine protection and guardianship. **Ye have not inclined your ear.** They paid no attention to God's reiterated commands, though the duty enjoined was so obvious and imperative and the reward promised was sure and faithful. W. H. G.

God here explains why He had commissioned

the prophet to bring the Rechabites into the Temple, and commanded him to set wine before them, and invite them to drink it; namely, that by their refusing to comply with the invitation, in obedience to their father Jonadab, he might convince the Jews of their disobedience to his commands, though those commands were more obligatory than the commands of Jonadab. For, first, Jonadab was but an earthly parent, and so had no absolute universal sovereignty over his children; but God was "the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel." Secondly, Jonadab's commands were not for the performance of any moral duty, but the doing of a thing which they might do or leave undone; God required of them what was but their moral duty, and for which there was the highest reason. Thirdly, Jonadab's commands had no promise annexed; God's precept had a promise annexed, yet they had not yielded Him that obedience which the sons of Jonadab had yielded *him*. He was the Father, but where was His honor? *Poole*.

**16, 17.** Judgments are threatened, as often before, against Judah and Jerusalem for their disobedience thus aggravated. The Rechabites shall rise up in judgment against them and shall condemn them; for they very punctually *performed the commandment of their father*, and continued and persevered in their obedience to it (verse 16); but *this people*, this rebellious and gainsaying people, *have not hearkened unto Me*; and therefore (verse 17) because they have not obeyed the precepts of the word, God will perform the threatenings of it: "*I will bring upon them, by the Chaldean army, all the evil pronounced against them, both in the law and in the prophets, for I have spoken to them, I have called to them*; spoken in a still small voice to them that were near and called aloud to them that were at a distance; tried all ways and means to convince and reduce them; spoken by My word, called by My providence, both for the same purpose, and yet all to no purpose; they have not *heard nor answered*." H.

**18, 19.** *The promise of God to the Rechabites.* This promise instantly and openly follows the open rebuke, and as designed, gives that rebuke an emphatic intensity and force. Because of their filial obedience, they receive the promise of the Fifth Commandment—of a perpetuated existence. The phrase "Stand before Me," which is figurative, implies that there should always be some of the tribe as participants in the service of Jehovah. Like all the Divine promises, this was probably conditional; and "its accomplishment may have

depended upon the fidelity with which their descendants kept their pledge." Modern travellers assert the existence at the present day, in Arabia, of small tribes claiming a lineal descent from the Rechabites, who are still loyal to the precepts of Jonadab. It is well to point the argument and appeal in behalf of abstinence from wine, with this noble example of the sons of Jonadab. But let us remember that the single point directly and designedly conveyed by this Divine message respects solely the contrast of *obedience* on the one side, and *disobedience* on the other. By pressing this point, of the superior obligation of obedience to God's commandment, a more effective use of the example may be made, even as regards the intemperate. A legitimate use of the Rechabites' example respecting abstinence from intoxicating drinks lies in the fact that they, in an age of comparative ignorance, were able to discern the evils of indulgence in the use of wine. B.

18. Having delivered his heavy message of judgment and woe upon Judah and Jerusalem, he turns to the house of the Rechabites with a message of approval and blessing. "Honor thy father and mother," says the apostle (Eph. 6 : 2), "which is the first commandment with promise." And throughout the Word of God this duty is emphasized and the promise reiterated. The commendation bestowed upon the Rechabites is for this one thing—their filial obedience—the reward for which is "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20 : 12). This Judah had forfeited; but the Rechabites had a right to claim it. W. H. G.—The thing which the Lord blessed on this occasion is one which He always blesses, and without which nothing can be blessed—obedience. The Rechabites thought that they were fulfilling a duty. The Rechabites had obeyed. It seems as if God was unwilling to look farther; the principle of obedience is so precious, so fundamental, so easily neglected, that God, when He meets with it, does not inquire too strictly into the form in which it has been realized. He does not quarrel captiously, if I dare so speak, with regard to the garb of the principle, for in His eyes, as in those of sound sense, "the body is more than raiment;" and as the abstinence which the Rechabites prescribed to themselves had nothing bad in itself, He blesses it, judging that obedience cannot be too much encouraged, nor the scruples of obedience handled too tenderly. *Vinet.*

The symbolical lesson which God instructs Jeremiah to read to the Israelites from the con-

duct of the Rechabites, whom no temptations could induce to swerve from their "father's commandment," while Israel so easily forgot and trampled upon His, is wonderfully touching. Nor is it the least instructive part of the lesson, that though "the children" He had "nourished and brought up had rebelled" against Him, He declares He would signally reward and honor the filial obedience even of the inferior type; and commissions Jeremiah to assure the Rechabites of it. *H. Rogers.*

19. *Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me forever.* The connection and the contrast which is plainly intended determine the meaning of these words to be that, while the inhabitants of Judah shall be cut off and banished from the land, the Rechabites shall be saved from threatened destruction. To "stand before the Lord" here does not mean to exercise the priestly office, as in Deut. 10 : 8 and Ezek. 44 : 15, nor to take the attitude of worshippers, as in Jer. 7 : 10, but to be preserved by Him, and possess His favor, as in Jer. 15 : 19 and Ps. 5 : 5. W. H. G.—The commands of Jonadab the Rechabite had been kept centuries after his death by his people, who are not descendants of Abraham, and who consequently participate in the covenant of promise only mediately and in the second line. Israel, however, had not obeyed the commands of Jehovah, the God of hosts, though they have been presented and inculcated unceasingly by prophets; therefore all the threatenings pronounced by the Lord on Israel shall be fulfilled. But to the Rechabites it is promised that Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before Jehovah. *Lange.*

In 1832 Dr. Joseph Wolff found the Rechabites of Jer. 35 near Senaa. One of them, Mousa by name, in answer to the question, Whose descendants are you? read from an Arabic Bible (Jer. 35 : 5-11), and said, "You will find us sixty thousand in number." You see the words of the prophet have been fulfilled: "Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before Me forever." Even as late as October, 1862, an Eastern traveller, Signor Pierotti, read a paper at the Cambridge meeting of the British Association, stating that he met a tribe calling themselves by this name near the Dead Sea. They had a Hebrew Bible, and told him the same story that had been told Dr. Wolff thirty years before. Even these historical proofs, for which I am mainly indebted to Smith's Bible Dictionary, are not exhaustive. But they suffice to show that the Rechabites are one of the Lord's standing witnesses pre-

served by Him age after age to testify to the reality of certain great Scripture facts over which the waves of time have rolled for several thousand years. The distinct preservation of the Rechabites belongs to the same class of facts with the preservation of the Jews and of the ancient Samaritans, all of whom are among the Lord's special witnesses to the historic and prophetic credibility of the Old Testament. H. C.

The superiority, or the greater nobleness, of self-denial, self-mortification, self-abnegation, in contrast with self-indulgence, self-gratification, self-enjoyment, is found reflected in the teachings of the Bible, both in connection with the assurance that ultimately the truest objective gain to one's self is through the surrender and forgetfulness of self, and in connection also with the primary and more elementary truth that selfishness is a lower attribute of man's nature, and that self-seeking is unworthy of a man's truer and better self. Precept and illustration combine for the enforcement of this truth, in the Old Testament and in the New. No better example in this line could perhaps be given from the Old Testament record than that which is furnished in the incident of the self-denying Rechabites and their commendation. It is not said that Jonadab exacted any vow from his people, or that they made him any specific pledge on the subject. It is only declared that he enjoined upon them this life of self-denial as a duty, and that they nobly adhered to the restrictions which he pointed out to them as desirable. For so doing they deserved credit; and for so doing they had the Lord's commendation. It was their filial adherence to their father's injunction of self-denying abstemiousness that was the immediate cause of their being held up before Judah, and so held up before the world, as examples worthy of imitation for all time to come. Not merely because they were obedient, but because they were self-denying in their conformity to the wise injunctions of their ancestor, were they thus honored above their fellows.

It is nobler now, as it was in the days of Jeremiah, to deny one's self than to indulge one's self; and without a *readiness* to exercise self-denial daily, even to the extent of the restrictions of the Rechabites, there is no possibility of serving God acceptably in city or in country. Says a greater than Jonadab, to all who would hear and heed His word—even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master: "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his

cross daily, and follow Me;" and again: "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross [and to bear a cross involves self-denial] and come after Me, cannot be My disciple. So, therefore, whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath [and so practises self-abnegation], he cannot be My disciple." There is, obviously, a great deal more than filial obedience covered by the example of the Rechabites, and the requirements of our Lord from His disciples. Intelligent self-denial for the sake of the right and at the command of Him whose we are and whom we serve, is an essential element in the noblest Christian manhood. This self-denial may—it often does—demand as an absolute duty the specific requirements of the Rechabite nomad-life—total abstinence from all that can intoxicate, the shunning of wealth-seeking, and a pilgrim life on earth. However this may be in any particular instance, the spirit which prompted the Rechabites to be self-denyingly faithful to the wise injunctions given to them by their ancestor is essential to the very existence of the Christian life, and is inseparable from the duties of Christian discipleship. S. S. T.

The simple purpose of this introduction of the Rechabites into the Word of God is to *reprove bad men in the Church by contrasting them with good men out of the Church*. The value of such a fragment in the Scriptures for practical use in all ages may be seen by a brief notice of the following hints:

1. The popular criticism upon the Church is true: "*Better men are out of it than some men in it.*" There are bad men in the Church, and very imperfect good ones. Men profess religion who will cheat in a trade, who will lie to cover the cheat, who will take a false oath to bolster the lie.

2. *The contrast between apostates in the Church, and good men out of it, is an exception to the general fact.* As the Rechabites of old were a small and exceptional sect, no fair representative of the heathen world, so now the good men who are not churchmen are not a fair specimen of what men naturally become who live out of covenant with God. As in the Jewish Church there were men and women who were not apostates, so there are multitudes in the Christian Church now who do not deserve the charge that they are no better than other men. The apostates and hypocrites on the one side, and the good men who are not churchmen on the other, are both exceptions to the general law. It is but fair to admit this. It is but just to claim it. The very fact that the alleged con-

trast attracts attention and provokes satire is proof of this.

3. *The concessions which Christians make to cynical critics of the Church need often to be qualified by loyalty to the brotherhood.* There is a virtue in loyalty to one's guild, which truth and justice sometimes call to the front. There is a tone of criticism of the Church which sounds very candid, and very faithful, and very independent of clanship, which, after all, is unmanly and mean, simply because *it is not true.* The faults of Christians are exaggerated. The numbers of the hypocritical are overrated. Guilt is assumed on insufficient evidence. Evidence which a jury would scout is deemed sufficient to condemn a professor of religion. Such accusers do not face the accused like men. They will swell a secret into common fame; yet, when summoned to bear witness, they skulk. The truth is that conscious hypocrites in the Church are comparatively few.

4. *The virtues of good men who are not churchmen are due largely to the salutary influence of the Church upon them.* The Rechabites owed their knowledge of the true God to the Jewish people. Their virtues were due to their association with that people, not to their knowledge or practice of heathenism and its fruits. Similar is the teaching of history in all subsequent ages. The *virtues* of the world in their finest growth live upon the *graces* of the Church. Christian *ideas* govern the public opinion of the world to-day, though spiritual religion is by no means in the ascendant. It takes but a small minority of earnest believers to carry with them the speculative belief of a large majority. So nations populous and mighty are nominally Christian to-day because they contain a nucleus of spiritual Christians. These keep alive the Christian religion as a power of restraint, of culture, of refinement, of civilization, of virtue, to multitudes to whom it is not yet a power of salvation. That such men are what they are, they owe to the living faith that is in the Church. They owe it to godly mothers and

praying fathers, and Christian wives, and the recollections of their own Christian childhood. That among them are found Christians in heart who are not such by profession, they owe to the more positive and consistent ones, who do not fear to profess before the world the faith they cherish in secret. The Church of Christ achieves thus a vast amount of unacknowledged conquest.

5. While God blesses goodness and the right wherever He finds them, He *still depends for them chiefly upon the Church which He has created for all time.* History, in this old Judean line, seems to turn aside for a moment to salute respectfully these ancient sons of temperance. Yet it speedily returns again to the old channel of the Church of God. No sect is taken as a substitute for the Church. God does not abandon His people and take up Rechabites in their stead. He knew His own mind when He founded the Church, and said to Abraham, "In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The great stream of civilization and redemption has flowed down the ages of the past, not through any accidental and wayside canal of Rechabite or Masonic virtue, but through the great river-bed of the Christian Church. Here are the living fountains. Here are treasured the truths which the world most needs to know. Here are garnered the promises which gild with golden radiance the world's future. The hope of all coming time is in this Church of the living God.

It becomes us all to walk humbly before God. Vows in the Church or out of it cannot save us. The contrite and believing *heart*—this and this only is the place in which God dwells. This is more to God than the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud—more than the Shechinah and the holy of holies. This is more to Christ than church and clergy and sacraments. "I heard a great voice out of heaven saying: Behold, the tabernacle of God is with *men*, and He will dwell with them. God Himself shall be with them and be their God." *Phelps.*

## Section 46.

## REIGNS OF JEHOIACHIN AND ZEDEKIAH.

2 KINGS 24 : 8-20 ; 25 : 1-7, 27-30 ; JEREMIAH 39 : 1-7 ; 52 : 1-11, 31-34.

2 KINGS 24 : 8-20 ; 25 : 1-7.

**24 : 8** JEHOIACHIN was eighteen years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned in Jerusalem three months : and his mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came unto the city, while his servants were besieging it ; and Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers : and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths ; none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon ; and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the chief men of the land, carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths a thousand, all of them strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem : and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For through the anger of the LORD did it come to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence : and Zedekiah re-

2 CHRONICLES 36 : 9, 10.

**9** JEHOIACHIN was eight years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem : and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD. And at the return of the year king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

2 KINGS 25 : 27-30.

**27** And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison ; and he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon. And he changed his prison garments, and did eat bread before him continually all the days of his life. And for his allowance, there was a continual allowance given him of the king, every day a portion, all the days of his life.

(Jeremiah 52 : 31-34 identical with above.)

JEREMIAH 52 : 1-11.

**1** Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem : and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. For through the anger of the LORD did it come to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence : and Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and encamped against it ; and they built forts against it round about. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. In the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine

25 : 1 belled against the king of Babylon. And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and encamped against it; and they 2 built forts against it round about. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of 8 king Zedekiah. On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the peo- 4 ple of the land. Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden : (now the Chaldeans were against the city round about :) and the king went by the way 5 of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho : and all his 6 army was scattered from him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah ; and they gave 7 judgement upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

(Verses 27-30 like Jeremiah 52 : 31-34.)

JEREMIAH 39 : 1-7.

1 And it came to pass when Jerusalem was taken, (in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his 2 army against Jerusalem, and besieged it; in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the 3 fourth month, the ninth day of the month, a breach was made in the city :) that all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the rest of the princes 4 of the king of Babylon. And it came to pass that when Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls : and he went out the way of 5 the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho : and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he gave judgement upon him. 6 Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes : also the king 7 of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon.

REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN, THREE MONTHS.

Called also Jeconiah and Coniah. The Principal Deportation to Babylon.

2 Kings 24 : 8-17 ; 25 : 25-27 ; 2 Chronicles 36 : 9, 10 ; Jeremiah 52 : 31-34.

FOLLOWING a practice not uncommon in the East, Nebuchadnezzar, while executing the

was sore in the city, so that there was no 7 bread for the people of the land. Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden ; (now the Chaldeans were against the city round about :) and they went 8 by the way of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho ; and all his army was scattered from 9 him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath ; and he gave judgement upon him. And the king of Babylon 10 slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes : he slew also all the princes of Judah in Rib- 11 lah. And he put out the eyes of Zedekiah ; and the king of Babylon bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

2 CHRONICLES 36 : 11-13.

11 Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign ; and he reigned 12 eleven years in Jerusalem : and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God ; he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth 13 of the LORD. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God : but he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning unto the LORD, the God of Israel.

rebel king who had defied his authority, made no change in the natural order of succession, but placed his son, Jehoiachin or Jeconiah, upon the throne at the age of eighteen. Jehoiachin, like all the kings of Josiah's stock, "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," and provoked Jeremiah, after he had reigned a few months, to declare that he was "a despised



broken idol, a vessel wherein there was no pleasure" (Jer. 26 : 28). G. R.—Jehoiachin was dethroned after a reign of three months by Nebuchadnezzar, who now came against him in person, and carried him away, together with the nobles, men of war and priests, to Babylon. This was the *second deportation*, and by it the better portion of the people was taken into captivity (see the vision of the two baskets of figs, Jer. 24). Among those carried to Babylon was Ezekiel, who from the fifth year of his captivity onward filled the office of prophet to the exiles at Chebar. Nebuchadnezzar made Mattaniah, a still remaining son of Josiah, his vassal-king, changing his name to Zedekiah. O.

At first the siege of Jerusalem was entrusted to subordinate officers. But when the fall of the city seemed near, Nebuchadnezzar himself appeared. Jehoiachin, together with the queen-mother, the court, the princes, and the leaders seem to have surrendered to the victor. The punishment inflicted on the city was of signal severity. All the treasures of the Temple and the palace were carried away, the heavier furnishings of the sanctuary being cut in pieces. Thus was the word of the Lord, long and often spoken, fulfilled (2 K. 24 : 12, 13). The king himself, his mother, his wives, and all the officials, whether of the court, the State, or the army, were carried to Babylon. Nay, to make sure of the permanence of the conquest, "all Jerusalem"—in the sense of what made it the capital—and all who in any sense were "strong and apt for war"—who could either lead, or fight, or prepare the means for it—were carried into captivity. Their number is roughly stated as 11,000, comprising 3000 ranked as "princes" and leading citizens, 7000 soldiers, and 1000 craftsmen, especially smiths. A. E.—These together constituted all that was important in the population of the city; the remainder were weak and insignificant—probably not only in respect of enterprise and military strength, but even in number. The population of modern Jerusalem, which seems to be nearly of the same size as the ancient city, is estimated by the most judicious of modern observers at from 10,000 to 17,000 (Robinson's "Researches"). That of the ancient city has been calculated, from its area, at 15,000 (Fergusson). The remnant left did not, therefore, in all probability exceed 5000 or 6000. When Jeremiah (52 : 28) says that the number of captives carried off at this time was 3023, we may suspect that his text has been corrupted. B. C.—Nebuchadnezzar looked well to his own interests when he de-

ported these classes, and not the poor, the less able, less thrifty, to Babylon. But their departure was ruinous to Jerusalem, and this also Nebuchadnezzar intended. It was, indeed, an irretrievable, crushing blow which had fallen on the nation, none the less ruinous and terrible that it had been so long predicted, and was so richly deserved. J. O.

Nebuchadnezzar saw the impolicy of leaving on the throne the nominee of Egypt. He therefore set the now lustreless crown upon the head of Josiah's youngest son, Mattaniah, whose name he changed to Zedekiah, and sent away Jehoiachin to Babylon. Jehoiachin was at this time but eighteen years of age; and he survived in Babylon till long after the entire subversion of the kingdom over which he had so briefly ruled. He seems to have been kept in some sort of confinement until the death of Nebuchadnezzar, but was liberated from restraint by his successor, and was treated with high distinction, among the kings of subverted thrones, whose presence glorified the imperial court. By the numerous captives who were eventually removed to the East, he was doubtless looked up to as their natural prince—the sole relic of the house of David; and it is likely that his influence availed much to secure for them many of the advantages they enjoyed in the land of their captivity. *Kitto*.

**2 K. 24 : 8. Eighteen years old.** The parallel passage of Chronicles has "eight years," which is probably the error of a copyist. That Jehoiachin was not a mere child when he ascended the throne is clearly indicated by Jer. 22 : 28. B. C.

**13.** Jehoiakim had saved his treasures at the expense of exactions from the people, and his "covetousness" had doubtless filled them still more (Jer. 22 : 17). These ill-gotten gains were now carried away, and with them such of the Temple vessels as were made of or plated with gold, the "cutting to pieces" being probably confined to the latter, with such large articles as the golden candlestick, etc. Of the smaller articles some few were spared, and the rest were preserved in Babylon, and restored on the return. Judgment thus again began at the house of God. J. O.

**2 K. 25 : 25-27 ; Jer. 52 : 31-34.** Jehoiachin survived for many years after the fall of Zedekiah. For a long time his imprisonment at Babylon was rigorous: he was closely confined and clad in a prison dress. The plots of the Egyptian party and the hopes of his return held out by the false prophet Hananiah (B. C. 595) explain this severity as well as Hananiah's

cruel execution ; but in the thirty-seventh year of his captivity he was released by Evil-merodach, who had just succeeded to the throne of Babylon (January 11th, B.C. 561). He was received with kind words, was placed in the royal presence on a throne above all the other captive kings, received a robe of honor, and a portion for his daily diet, until his death. With him expired the royal line of Solomon. "This man was written childless," as Jeremiah had declared ; and "no man of his seed prospered, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." The inheritance of David passed on to the line of his son Nathan, whose representative, Salathiel, is therefore inserted in the genealogies as the son of Jehoiachin, and the ancestor of Christ. P. S.

Jehoiachin, to the day of his death, lived in peace and comfort at the court of Babylon. Nothing can be gathered from the passage as to how much longer Jehoiachin lived ; he may or he may not have survived Evil-merodach. The author of Kings is writing Jewish, not Babylonian history, and is only anxious to impress on his readers the fact that Jehoiachin, after his long and wearisome captivity, died in comparative comfort and honor. Amid the darkness that has gathered round the closing scenes of his history, he is glad to notice this one ray of light. He is glad to indicate that even in their extreme affliction the seed of David was not wholly cast off. Perhaps he intends to hold before the eyes of his nation the existence of Jehoiachin as a type of their own fate—an encouragement to them to hope that the time would come when God might take compassion upon them, and terminate their captivity also. He thus leaves them with a comforting thought, an anticipation of the dawn that was soon about to break ; resembling in this the great bulk of the prophets, who, however sternly they may chide and menace the backsliding nation, end their prophecies with joyous strains, promising an ultimate restoration of the seed of Abraham to God's grace and favor. B. C.

Two points may be helpfully recalled at this juncture of the history.

1. *The relations of the two great empires of the "North" and the "South,"* as these terms are employed in the prophecy of Daniel. The empire of the "North," or more properly of the East, extended during a period of nearly two thousand years under three different names—the Chaldean, the Assyrian, and the Babylonian. B.—Chaldea was the lower or southern half, and Assyria the upper or northern

half, of the great valley of the Tigris and Euphrates. It was the cradle of the human family, becoming an empire as early, probably, as 2500 B.C., and remaining such for about twelve hundred years, or down to 1300 B.C. At that time it was conquered by Assyria, which had previously been one of its provinces ; and from this time it formed a part of the Assyrian empire, for nearly seven hundred years. For much of the time, however, it was restless under the Assyrian yoke, and engaged in frequent rebellions. At length in 625 B.C., when the Assyrian empire was broken and near its fall, Chaldea reasserted its independence, and soon became the seat of a second, or lower, commonly called the Babylonian empire. It was a splendid empire, but lasted less than a hundred years. The founder of the new empire was Nabopolassar, who reigned from 625 to 604 B.C. In 607 B.C. he associated with him his son, Nebuchadnezzar, who became the greatest of the Babylonian monarchs. *Todd.*—The empire of the "South," or Egypt, had its origin at a far earlier date than the Chaldean. It is the earliest kingdom referred to in the Bible. In the time of Moses it was possessed of the highest civilization, and of supreme power. For many centuries a conflict existed between the kingdoms of the "North" and of the "South." Many times the armies of each power invaded the territory of the other, seeking to make permanent conquest. The varying fortunes of this protracted conflict make up the known history of the centuries preceding the scheme of Daniel's prophecy.

2. *The bearing of this conflict upon the history of Israel and Judah.* God had employed the smaller kingdom of Syria, and the adjacent tribes of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, with the remaining Canaanites, especially the Philistines, as instruments to chasten His people. But the two chief agents by which He aided or hindered their prosperity were the two great empires, whose military movements seem to have been ordered of God, that He might use them in dealing with His people. This, indeed, is *the key-fact of all ancient history.* It is repeatedly so declared, by statement or clear hint, throughout the Old Testament.

The death of Josiah occurred in connection with an advance by Pharaoh-Necho in the direction of Assyria, with a view to its conquest. Passing along the coast-line of Palestine, with no purpose of attacking the kingdom of Judah, this monarch's progress was opposed by Josiah. The reason of this opposition is variously inferred, but is not known. There seem to have

been two parties in Judah—one in favor of alliance with Egypt, the other holding to an honest observance of tributary stipulations already existing with Assyria. On the supposition that Josiah belonged to the latter party, his persistent opposition to the Egyptian king is justified as both consistent and loyal. The four successors of Josiah, and only remaining kings of Judah, are only memorable for weakness and wickedness. Through the twenty years of their reign Judah was oppressed and despoiled by one or other of the two great monarchies. Nebuchadnezzar put Jehoiakim to death, and carried to Babylon Jehoiachin, the royal family, the priests and the princes, 7000 soldiers and 1000 skilled craftsmen. As his vassal, Zedekiah was placed on the throne of Judah. B.

REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH, B.C. 596-586, ELEVEN YEARS.

2 *Kings* 24 : 18-20 ; 2 *Chronicles* 36 : 11-13 ; *Jeremiah* 39 : 1-7 ; 52 : 1-11.

Josiah had four sons (1 *Chron.* 3 : 15)—Johanan, the eldest, who probably died before his father ; Jehoiakim, or Eliakim, the second, who was twenty-five years old at his father's death ; Jehoahaz, the third, otherwise called Shallum, who, when his father died, was aged twenty-three ; and Mattaniah, the youngest, who must have been then aged ten or nine. It was this fourth son, now grown to manhood, whom Nebuchadnezzar appointed king in Jehoiachin's room. *Hammond.*—Zedekiah, the twentieth and last king of Judah, and the youngest son of Josiah and Hamutai, was twenty-one years old at his accession, and reigned eleven years, till the final destruction of Jerusalem. His proper name, Mattaniah, was changed to Zedekiah at his accession. The only events of his reign, except the brief record of the fall of Jerusalem, are those connected with the history of Jeremiah, from whose book we learn the spirit of the times. Zedekiah accepted his royalty over the impoverished remnant of the Jews as the vassal of Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he was bound by every principle of good faith. The fate of his brother and his nephew had proved the hopelessness of rebellion even before the whole strength of the nation had been carried into captivity. The miserable remnant might well envy the condition of their captive brethren, and the time had at length come for piety and patriotism to show themselves in a wise submission to the will of God. Of such a course Jeremiah was the assiduous adviser. P. S.—The events connected with the history

of Jeremiah and those connected with the fall of Jerusalem sum up the records of his reign. Established upon the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, after the Temple and palace had been despoiled and the best warriors and artisans of the kingdom had been sent to Babylon, his kingship was only nominal and tributary. Disregarding the counsel of Jeremiah, he followed in the evil courses of Jehoiakim, and was persuaded to break his allegiance to the Babylonish king. His character was rather weak than wicked, yet at the instigation of the Egyptian party, like Manasseh, he shed much innocent blood. B.

Zedekiah's dealings with Jeremiah exhibit him as a weak rather than a wicked man. He had a friendly feeling toward the prophet, a belief in his supernatural gifts, and a desire to shield him from the violence of the nobles, who sought his life. But he had not sufficient strength of character to adopt the course which the prophet recommended, to impose his will upon the nobles, or even to protect Jeremiah from them boldly and openly. He was a man of half measures, timid, impressible, vacillating. He strove to reconcile an acknowledgment of Jehovah with disobedience to His expressed will, kindness toward Jeremiah with complaisance toward his persecutors, renewal of the covenant with flagrant transgressions of its plain requirements (*Jer.* 34 : 8-21). Better disposed than any of the later monarchs except Josiah, he nevertheless brought his country to destruction. Having neither sufficient wisdom to perceive what the course of political affairs was likely to be, nor sufficient faith to accept the authoritative announcements made to him of what the course was to be, he undertook an impossible task, and ruined both himself and his country. B. C.

**2 K. 24 : 20.** *Zedekiah's rebellion permitted by God for the destruction of Judah.* Had he remained true to his allegiance to Babylon, the city and the Temple of Jehovah might have continued, and Zedekiah remained ruler of the Babylonian province of Judah. But God had decreed the captivity of Judah as well as Israel. The cup of Judah's iniquity was now full, and Nebuchadnezzar was God's instrument in its final subjection and exile.

**2 K. 25 : 1-3.** *The closing siege of Jerusalem and its effects.* The memorable day is here given in which the armies of Babylon invested the city, and the period of continuance of the siege. It began on the tenth day of the tenth month in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign. This day ever afterward was commemorated by

the Israelites as a fast. On that day the vast army of Nebuchadnezzar, comprising representatives of all the kingdoms of the earth under his dominion, "pitched against Jerusalem, and built forts round about it." The siege lasted a year and a half. The result is simply stated in the fact that there was no bread for the people in the city. Intimations in the Book of Lamentations show how terrible were the sufferings of the besieged inhabitants. B.—The final siege of the Jerusalem of the monarchy lasted for eighteen months—a long siege according to our modern ideas, but short compared to many of the great sieges of history. The siege of Troy was ten years, that of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar occupied thirteen years, and that of Ashdod (or Azotus) by Psammetichus, king of Egypt, twenty-nine years. Of course, these sieges were rather blockades than a series of assaults. The description, in the passage before us, of the capture of Jerusalem, is easily understood from the position and character of the place. The two southern hills, Zion and Moriah, were, under the conditions of ancient warfare, impregnable on the south and east sides, while to the north and west they were flanked by the lower city, where was the chief part of the population, and had inner walls, defensible, should the outer city be stormed. The Chaldean army assaulted on the north side of the lower city, at what was afterward called the second wall, near where the Damascus gate now stands. This was the only part where mounds and battering-rams could be used, the other faces of the city being too steep. Zedekiah and the garrison were in Zion, the city of David, within the inner wall; but they abandoned all attempt at further resistance, and fled. *Tristram*.

1. Extreme exactness with respect to a date indicates the extreme importance of the event dated. In the whole range of the history contained in the two Books of the Kings, there is no instance of the year, month, and day being all given excepting in the present chapter, where we find this extreme exactness three times (verses 1, 4 and 8). *Hammond*.—As the final catastrophe approaches, the historian becomes more close and exact in his dates, marking not only the year, but the *month* and the *day*, on which the siege began, no less than those on which it closed. Compare Jer. 52 : 4 and Ezek. 24 : 1, from which last passage we find that on the very day when the host of Nebuchadnezzar made its appearance before Jerusalem, the fact was revealed to Ezekiel in Babylonia, and the fate of the city announced to him (verses 6-14).

**Against Jerusalem.** The army seems to have at first spread itself over all Judea. It fought, not only against Jerusalem, but "against all the cities of Judah that were left"—and especially against Lachish and Azekah (Jer. 34 : 7), two cities of the south (2 Chron. 11 : 9), which had probably been strongly garrisoned in order to maintain the communication with Egypt. This division of the Babylonian forces encouraged the Egyptians to make an effort. After the siege of Jerusalem had continued for a certain time, news arrived that Hophra had put his troops in motion and was advancing to the relief of his Jewish allies (Jer. 37 : 5). On hearing this, Nebuchadnezzar, who saw the importance of concentrating his forces, broke up from before Jerusalem, and marched away to the south. There he probably effected a junction with the detachments which were besieging Azekah and Lachish, thus saving them from destruction, and at the same time showing to the Egyptians his readiness to give them battle. It appears that the display was enough. The timid southerners, finding their enemy prepared to receive them, shrank back, returned into their own country (Jer. 37 : 7; Ezek. 17 : 17), and took no further part in the war. Nebuchadnezzar then led back his army, and once more invested the city. B. C.

**In the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month.** Upon this very day Ezekiel, in captivity, announced to the exiles about him that siege had been laid to the city (Ezek. 24 : 1, 2), and that it should certainly be taken, and the sanctuary profaned. This crisis in the affairs of the capital city was a turning-point likewise in Ezekiel's ministry. Up to this time the exiles had maintained their confidence that the city of God could not be taken, and that the captivity would be of short duration; and, in consequence of these fallacious hopes, they did not submit with penitence and humility to this Divine discipline. It was necessary, therefore, for Ezekiel constantly to utter the language of denunciation and warning, and to insist upon the certainty and necessity of the overthrow of the city. From the day of the beginning of the siege until word was brought him of the fall of the city (Ezek. 24 : 27; 33 : 21, 22) he was dumb as to the exercise of his ministry, and discontinued his disclosures on that subject. Thenceforward his ministry was one of consolation and blessing, setting forth the assurance that God would protect and regather His captive people. W. H. G.

3. **The famine.** That the city yielded

only to famine—famine which brought pestilence in its train—is apparent from many passages of Jeremiah (21 : 7, 9 ; 32 : 24 ; 38 : 9, etc.). The intensity of the suffering endured may be gathered from Lamentations, Ezekiel and Josephus. The complexions of the men grew black with famine (Lam. 4 : 8 ; 5 : 10) ; their skin was shrunk and parched (*ibid.* 4 : 8) ; the rich and noble women searched the dung-hills for scraps of offal (*ibid.* 4 : 5) ; the children perished for want, or were even devoured by their parents (*ibid.* 2 : 20 ; 4 : 3, 4, 10 ; Ezek. 5 : 10) ; water was scarce, as well as food, and was sold at a price (Lam. 5 : 4) ; a third part of the inhabitants died of the famine and the plague which grew out of it (Ezek. 5 : 12). B. C.

**2 K. 25 : 4, 5.** *The escape, pursuit, and capture of Zedekiah and his army.* A breach was made in the walls, and the city was entered at midnight (Josephus ; Ezek. 12 : 2-12). The entrance was effected by the northern gate. Through the darkness of the night, lit up, if at all, only by the nine days' moon, the Chaldean guards silently made their way from street to street, till they suddenly appeared in the centre of the Temple court, in the middle gateway which opened directly on the great brazen altar. Never before had such a spectacle been seen in the inviolable sanctuary of Jerusalem. Then the sleeping city woke. A clang and cry resounded through the silent precincts at that dead hour of night. The first victims were those who, whether from religious or superstitious feelings and duties, were habitually occupants of the sacred buildings. The virgin marble of the courts ran red with blood, like a rocky wine-press in the vintage (Lam. 1 : 15). The alarm soon spread to the palace. In the twilight of the early summer dawn, these dreadful scenes were dimly discerned from the palace below ; and before the sun had risen, the king, with his wives and children and the royal guard, escaped, not by any of the regular gates, but by a passage broken through a narrow alley confined between two walls, at the southeastern corner of the city, which the Chaldean army had not been able completely to invest. They passed out with their heads muffled, either for disguise, or to express their sense of the greatness of the calamity, and bearing on their shoulders such articles of value as they hoped to save. As in the case of David, the object of the king was to escape to the east of the Jordan. He and his companions descended, unobserved, by the royal gardens, and down the steep descent to Jericho. There he was overtaken by the Chaldean soldiers, who had re-

ceived intelligence of his flight from deserters ; and in that wide plain, the scene of the first triumph of Joshua, was fought the last fight of the expiring monarchy. His troops fled, and were scattered to the winds. *Stanley.*

With this account of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar should be compared the narrative of its later destruction by Titus (A. D. 70). History does not always repeat itself ; but in this instance it does so with marvellous fidelity. The close investment of the city, the desperate resistance, the horrors of famine within, the incidents of the capture, the burning of the Temple, the demolition of the walls, and the captivity of the people, present striking parallels in the two cases. By one of those rare coincidences that sometimes occur, it was on the very same month and day of the month on which the Temple was burned by Nebuchadnezzar, that the sanctuary was fired by the soldiers of Titus. The earlier destruction fulfilled the predictions of the prophets ; the later, the predictions of our Lord. One stands appalled at so complete a wreck of a city which God had once honored by making it the place of His abode, and for which He had done such great things in the past. But the lesson we are to learn from it is that nothing can reverse the action of moral laws. God is terrible in His justice. Though a person or place is as "the signet upon His right hand," yet will He pluck it thence, if it abandons itself to wickedness (Jer. 22 : 24, 28). J. O.

**4.** Ezekiel (Ezek. 12 : 12) prophesied the very details of the flight. It was to be "in the dark," the king himself was to "carry" some of his valuables, they were to "dig through" the earthen ramparts ; and all appears to have been literally fulfilled. The flight was taken in the opposite direction from the entrance of the besiegers ; two walls, which probably ran down the valley between Zion and the Temple mount, afforded cover to the fugitives as far as to the south city wall, and there some postern let them out to the king's garden. That is a tragic touch. It was no time then to gather flowers. The forlorn and frightened company seems to have scattered when once outside the city ; for there is a marked contrast in verse 4 between "they fled" and "he went." In the description of his flight, Zedekiah is still called, as in verses 1 and 2, the king ; but after his capture he is only "Zedekiah." A. M.

**6. They brought him to Riblah.** Nebuchadnezzar had, some time before, left Nebuzaradan in command ; and as he was carrying on the siege of Tyre at the same time,

had himself pitched his camp at Riblah, where the caravan route from Chaldea across the desert enters the upper Syrian plain, and then divides, one road leading south to Samaria and Judea, and another southwest under the spurs of Lebanon toward Tyre. It is situated on the side of a stream near the mountains, in a wide fertile plain, and was a regular outpost of Assyrian armies. It still retain its ancient name. From this position, then, the king could control the operations of both the besieging armies. *Triatram.*—**And they gave judgment upon him.** As a rebel, who had broken his covenant and his oath (Ezek. 17 : 16, 18), Zedekiah was brought to trial before Nebuchadnezzar and his great lords. The facts could not be denied, and sentence was therefore passed upon him, nominally by the court, practically by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52 : 9). By an unusual act of clemency, his life was spared ; but the judgment was still sufficiently severe. *Hammond.*

7. This king, Zedekiah, both weak and wicked, met a fearful doom—his sons slain before his eyes, himself brought to look face to face into the eyes of the Chaldean king against whom he had faithlessly rebelled. Then his eyes were put out, and himself taken in chains to Babylon to die there. With singular minuteness all the apparently conflicting prophecies concerning him were precisely fulfilled. Ezekiel (chap. 12 : 13) had said of him, "I will bring him to Babylon, yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there." Precisely so. He was borne there, yet never to see that great city not the light of day there. These nobles of Judah, whom we have seen exerting a sway so absolute and so pernicious over this weak king, are all slain. H. C.—Thus were fulfilled two prophecies that seemed to contradict one another ; the first that of Jeremiah, that "Zedekiah's eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon" (Jer. 32 : 4), and the other that of Ezekiel, that "he should not see Babylon, though he should die there." *W. Lowth.*

He was made to witness the execution of his own sons, and of all the princes of his court. These fearful executions were then indelibly impressed upon his mind by the destruction of his own sight. He was then bound in chains, and remained in prison until his death.

In the death of Zedekiah ended the royal house of David. And thus was closed the sad experiment of monarchy in Israel. It had been begun nearly five hundred years before, by the people's rejection of Jehovah's personal rule and their choice of Saul as their king. Broken

in twain at Solomon's death, the severed parts had each nineteen kings (or twenty, if we count Tibni and Athaliah). The great root-sin in each kingdom was idolatry ; the source of all the long series of calamities, as it was the cause of successive Divine judgments. For this cause at last God was constrained to extirpate the desired monarchy, and to depopulate the very land which He had originally given to their fathers. But the great evil was eradicated by the long captivity in Babylon. In the sad years of exile the remnant of God's people learned the lesson taught by a discipline so severe. Strangers in a strange land, the faithful ones among them pondered the teachings of the prophets, whose books they had borne with them. And God interposed still in their behalf by merciful providences, and communicated with them by the living prophets Daniel and Ezekiel. Thus He prepared them, when at length they utterly gave up their idolatry, for the period of return and partial restoration in the land of their fathers. B.

#### DISTINCTIVE PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

The sinful heart remains unwarned and untouched by the most fearful consequences of others' sin, though these are seen ever so clearly. Zedekiah and his princes received warning upon warning, not only by the mouth of Jeremiah, but by the successive visitations of calamity during the three preceding brief reigns. Yet they would not learn these multiplied lessons ; but in the face of consequences so terrible they filled up the measure of their own iniquities. And such has ever been the course of the naturally deceitful, desperately wicked heart of man. Even when sentence is executed speedily upon others, their hearts remain set in them to do evil.

God's strange work of judgment will at last be performed. By the legitimate effect of his own evil doing upon the transgressor, and by the natural instrumentality of other wicked men, His visitations of punishment are finally wrought. Thus was it with the people of Judah in these closing reigns. And this is one of the strongly significant lessons of these reigns. God will not be mocked, nor will He stay His avenging hand, when the day of His mercy is overpassed.

This captive, blinded, imprisoned, crushed and hopeless king presents to us a signal type of the end of every wilful transgressor against Divine mercy. Under sin's cruel mastery the soul is at last bound and blinded, and

hopelessly crushed forever in the prison of despair.

Yet *God is rich in mercy* to all that call upon Him. He desires not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And He will save to the uttermost all that come unto Him by Christ Jesus. B.

The story of the Judean captivity brings to view, as every other great event in history does, these two distinct lines of purpose—the line of God and the line of man. To effect God's will in the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, this one man must suffer the barbarities of ancient warfare, and die at last a dethroned prince, a childless father, a blind old man, in an enemy's country, and in a dungeon. Yet the great wheels of Providence moved on calmly and relentlessly, crushing out that one life as if no being in the universe cared for it. No friendly ear seemed to hear the death-cry of the victim.

Of the many truths which the passage before us teaches, *this mysterious intervolution of the plans of God with the plans of men* will seem to some minds the most impressive. The enclosure of the plans of men within the plans of God is such that *commonly men appear to be left very much to themselves*. This unfortunate prince, whose lot it was to close the line of independent monarchs on the throne of Judah, does not appear to have been overruled by any visible network of Divine purposes. Yet all the while a plan of God enveloped him, which touched and checked at all points his plans, directed his workings to God's ends, and wrought out over and around him a chapter of universal history, which was to concern the world in distant ages, and nations yet unborn. Such is the sublime involution of every human life with the purposes of God. So noiseless is His working, that, when men are defeated, His agency is not forced upon their notice. They need not see Him if they choose *not* to see Him. Commonly they do not see Him. They say of their misfortunes, "Luck was against me."

In leaving men to themselves in the forming and working of their own plans, *Divine control does not prevent the occurrence of very shocking catastrophes*. God does seem to leave men to their fate at times, as if death-throes were no concern of His. All happy things at such times appear to mock human agony with a ferocity all the more unbearable because it is so still and so beautiful, yet so cold-blooded. Individuals are left to work out their own ruin. Tempters do devil's work on the young and the unwary. Innocent ones suffer with the guilty. Nations trample out nations in the rage of their huge

passions. The millions are dragged under by the pride of one. Helpless women and little children are the victims. The great wheels crash into and crumple up the little wheels. Happy homes give place to battle-grounds. Wheat-fields grow rank, fertilized by human blood. Artillery thunders in cemeteries, and ploughs open graves. So human life goes on. This is *history*.

Yet the plans of God *envelop and use the plans of men with more than motherly tenderness for every man, every woman, every child*. In infinite pity He looks down upon man, woman, child, one by one. The remoteness of His hiding is only the measure of His love. All the mystery springs from the fact that His melting eye looks so far ahead, and His soft hand reaches down to the roots of suffering, so far beyond our sight, or even our will to see. God only knows the love of God. This truth in its fulness we owe to the Bible. Through the whole range of the Old Testament this idea runs—that God is a personal and faithful friend to every one who will be *His* friend. Do we venture to say, "Our Father"? He responds, "As one whom his *mother* comforteth, so will I comfort thee." The New Testament declares the same with yet more intense significance. Taking this key from God's word, we can unlock the whole mystery of life so far as suffering is concerned. To eyes once opened to this truth, it throws a flood of golden light over the blackest and most tempestuous midnight of a troubled life. Such a man *knows* that there is a God in heaven whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, but who deigns to dwell in the homes of men. You can neither prove it to him nor disprove it. He knows it.

The interlacing of the plans of God with the plans of men *goes far toward explaining the mystery of shocking and exceptional calamity*. Starting with the inexplicable *fact* of sin, there is little mystery left in any kind or degree or combinations of *suffering*. In a world overrun with sin and steeped in guilt as this world is, suffering is no mystery. It is God's great remedial antidote to sin. The mystery would be fearful if there were none. Suffering is a wonderful fertilizer to the roots of character. The great object of this life is character. This is the only thing we can carry with us into eternity. Benevolent discipline, therefore, is aimed at the accumulating, the consolidating, and the purifying, of character. To gain the most of it, and the best of it, is the object of probation. For such an object, suffering must often take on a surgical severity.

The interworking of the plans of God with the plans of men *suggests the only true method of happy as well as holy living*. It is to make our plans one with God's plans. Thus blessedness is sure for both worlds. Study God's plans; study His providences; study His word; hearken for the whispers of His Spirit. Make much of still hours. Find out thus your place in God's purposes of procedure. Then drop into that place trustfully and contentedly. Move with His moves, start at His bidding, go here, go there, stay, as He directs. Lie still and suffer, if that be the order from above. Have no will but His. *Phelps*.

JEREMIAH 52D A SUPPLEMENT BY THE COMPILER.

The last verse of chapter 51 runs: "Thus far the words of Jeremiah." This 52d chapter is not Jeremiah's work; it is not his style. The author of it writes *Jehoiachin*; Jeremiah writes him always *Jeconiah*, or *Coniah*. It is merely historical. The author, whoever he was, relates the capture of Jerusalem, the fate of Zedekiah, the pillage and burning of the city and the Temple. He mentions also certain persons of distinction who were slain by the Chaldeans. He mentions the number of the captives that were carried to Babylon at three different times; and concludes with the deliverance of King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon, in which he had been for thirty-seven years. It is very likely that the whole chapter has been compiled from some chronicle of that time; or

it was designed as a *preface* to the Book of the *Lamentations*; and would stand with great propriety before it, as it contains the *facts* on which that inimitable poem is built. A. C.

This chapter was confessedly added by some one after Jeremiah's time, probably by Ezra, or whoever revised the sacred writings after the return of the Jews from Babylon, and collected them into one body. It contains a brief history of the captivity, nearly the same, word for word, as it is related in the second Book of Kings, chap. 24:18-20 and 25, together with some few additions. Some have supposed it placed here as a proper introduction to the Book of Lamentations. But more probably the design was, by immediately subjoining this historical narrative of the desolations of the Jewish nation to the predictions of Jeremiah concerning them, to hold forth a nearer view of the exact accomplishment of the Divine word of prophecy. *Blayney*.—It is by no means unnatural that a judicious compiler should deem it important to append to such a book of prophecies a succinct historical sketch of the fall of Jerusalem, the disposal made of the captives, and the ultimate fortunes of their surviving king, Jehoiachin. If Jeremiah had written this chapter, there is no reason apparent why it should not have come in its natural order with chap. 39, where, in verses 1-10, he gives his account of the capture of the city. If these views are correct, this chapter should appropriately have been styled, not *Jeremiah*, chap. 52, but "*A supplement to Jeremiah by the compiler*." H. C.

## Section 47.

### CHAPTERS FROM JEREMIAH CONTAINING THE MAIN INCIDENTS OF THE PROPHET'S CONNECTION WITH ZEDEKIAH.

JEREMIAH 27 AND 28; 34; 21, 37 AND 38; 32.

*Summaries of Zedekiah's Reign, Explanatory of these Chapters from Jeremiah.*

ZEDEKIAH, the last king of Judah, was a weak prince, who lived in dependence upon the upstarts who had now seized upon power. He had sworn fealty to Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron. 36:13), and had testified his submission to him, both by an embassy in the beginning of his reign (Jer. 29:3) and a personal visit to Baby-

lon in the fourth year (51:59). It was then that Jeremiah wrote his prophecy of the future destruction of Babylon (chaps. 50, 51), when, as is therein declared, the hammer of the world should be broken in pieces by a mightier, and delivered it to the royal courier to read it in Babylon, and then to cast the roll, after binding a stone to it, into the river Euphrates. But the king's party was meditating a revolt from Babylon, and a consultation with the ambassa-



dors of certain neighboring States took place at Jerusalem at this very time (Jer. 27:3). In vain did Jeremiah warn them, by repeatedly declaring the Divine appointment of Nebuchadnezzar to be the instrument of judgment to Judah and the surrounding nations. The *lying prophets*, who both in Jerusalem and among the Jews already in captivity predicted the speedily approaching end of the Babylonian servitude, found more willing listeners (Jer. 27-29). In the ninth year of his reign, Zedekiah at last openly broke his oath, and concluded an alliance with the Egyptian king, Hophra (elsewhere called Apries). Then Ezekiel uttered from his captivity his threatening words concerning Jerusalem, chaps. 17 and 21 belonging to this period. Before the Egyptian monarch had yet completed his preparations, Nebuchadnezzar appeared with an army in Palestine (Jer. 34:1-7); the country towns were destroyed, the fortresses surrounded, and Jerusalem prepared for an obstinate resistance. Jeremiah counselled the surrender of the city. But when the Chaldean army marched against the now advancing Hophra, the newly awakened arrogance of the ruling party no longer heeded any warning. Jeremiah was cast into prison, but secretly released by the king, and kept in the court of the prison (chap. 37). When, on the return of the Chaldean army, he renewed his threatening announcements, he was cast by the princes into a dungeon, that he might there perish with hunger. Being again delivered by the king, he in vain entreated him to surrender to the Chaldees (chap. 38). While, however, notwithstanding the heroic defence of the city, its danger was daily increasing, and famine was raging terribly among the besieged (cf. Lam. 2:20; 4:9 sqq.), the voice of the prophet was lifted up in the midst of the misery that surrounded him, to proclaim with exulting confidence the glorious future awaiting the chosen people and the city of God, and to prophesy, while the ancient form of the theocracy was being destroyed and the throne of David trampled under foot, concerning the new covenant and the righteous branch of David (Jer. 30-33). After a siege of eighteen months, a breach was made in the fortifications. Zedekiah with a portion of his forces endeavored to escape, but was brought back to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, and, after his sons had been executed before his eyes, was deprived of his sight and taken in chains to Babylon (39:1-7; 2 K. 25:1-7; cf. also Ezek. 12:13). *Oehler*.

Jeremiah's great prophecy against Babylon, for the consolation of the exiles, was rendered

the more impressive by the sign which followed it. Seraiah, the son of Neriah, who carried this prophecy to Babylon, was directed, after reading it, to tie a stone to the volume and to sink it in the Euphrates, saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her" (50, 51). The occasion found for executing this commission was a visit which Zedekiah paid to Babylon in the *fourth* year of his reign (B.C. 594-93), probably to pay his tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, or perhaps to defend himself against the first suspicions of treasonable dealings with Egypt. For in the same year Pharaoh-Necho, who seems never to have ventured to meet Nebuchadnezzar after the defeat of Carchemish, was succeeded by his son Psammetichus II. (the Psammis of Herodotus). From the Book of Ezekiel, who began in this year to enforce upon the exiles at Babylon the same lessons that Jeremiah was teaching at Jerusalem, we learn that Zedekiah entered into a treasonable correspondence with the new king of Egypt, which the prophet denounces as a gross violation of his plighted faith, destined to end in the king's being brought to Babylon for punishment, while his people should fall by the sword or be scattered to the winds (Ezek. 17:11-21). The terms of the agreement with Egypt are expressly stated by the prophet: "He rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people;" and we are forbidden to give Zedekiah credit for a patriotic resistance by the declaration of the historian: "He rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto Jehovah, God of Israel" (2 Chron. 36:13). At Jerusalem the plot appeared so far ripe that the false prophet Hananiah promised the return of Jehoiachin within two years, and publicly broke off the neck of Jeremiah the yoke which he wore, as a sign of the hopeless subjection of Judah and the surrounding nations, who seem to have joined the Egyptian league. Jeremiah replied that the yoke of wood (the present vassalage of Babylon) should be replaced by a yoke of iron (the final destruction of the nation), and predicted the death of Hananiah, which happened within the year (Jer. 27, 28). We find further evidence of the progress of the conspiracy in the Book of Ezekiel. His vision of the Temple at Jerusalem, in the fifth day of the sixth month of the sixth year of the Captivity (B.C. 594-93), reveals the idol abominations which would soon be punished by the destruction of all but a

small chosen remnant, and other visions and types follow to the like effect (chaps. 8-12). The plainer language of Ezekiel, about a year later (on the tenth of the fifth month of the seventh year of Zedekiah), when the elders of Judah came to him to inquire of Jehovah concerning the state of Jerusalem, serves to show that the rebellion had broken out (chaps. 20, 22, 23). The utter corruption of the people at this time, their persecution of God's prophets and rejection of His word, so that His wrath came upon them "till there was no remedy;" the wickedness of Zedekiah in not humbling himself before the word of God by Jeremiah; his faithlessness to the oath he had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar, and that not from religious patriotism, for "he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto Jehovah God of Israel;" and the result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people till the time of the Persian Empire, so that the land kept her Sabbaths for seventy years, as Jeremiah had foretold—these outlines of the catastrophe are drawn by the writer of the Chronicles (36 : 11-21).

It was still two years before Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, with the resolution to destroy it utterly for Zedekiah's treason. From this point the dates of Ezekiel's prophecies accompany the events at Jerusalem. The city was invested in the ninth year of Zedekiah, on the tenth day of the tenth month; and on the same day Ezekiel was commissioned to foretell its utter destruction, by striking images, to the exiles at Babylon (chap. 24). The forces marshalled against Jerusalem comprised Nebuchadnezzar's whole army, all the vassal kings of his empire, and all the nations around, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites and others, who came up to avenge the quarrels of a thousand years. All the fortified cities of Judah had already been taken except Lachish and Azekah (Jer. 34 : 1, 7). In this extremity Zedekiah proclaimed freedom to all Hebrew slaves, and sent Zephaniah the priest, with another messenger, to entreat the prayers of Jeremiah. In reply, he announced the coming destruction of the city and the fate of the king himself. The king now attempted to silence him by a mild confinement in the court of the prison in the palace, where he had the society of Baruch. While thus shut up, and that in a city environed by a mighty enemy, Jeremiah purchased, as the "Goël," a field at his native village of Anathoth in Benjamin, as a sign of that return which he went on to prophesy, together with the glories of Messiah's kingdom. This act of

faith has been compared to that of the Roman who bought, at its full value, the ground on which Hannibal was encamped.

And now there broke forth a deceptive ray of hope. Pharaoh-Hophra, who had just succeeded to the throne of Egypt, led the forces which his father had collected to the relief of Zedekiah. His capture of Gaza (Jer. 47 : 1-7) caused Nebuchadnezzar to suspend the siege of Jerusalem, and to march against him. And now Jerusalem exulted with the joy of a city delivered from a hopeless siege. But Jeremiah forbade them to deceive themselves, while, on the distant banks of the Euphrates, Ezekiel also foretold the ruin of Egypt (Jer. 37 : 6-10). The princes of Judah now broke their solemn covenant to release their Hebrew slaves; and Jeremiah, having denounced their conduct, left the city for his home in Benjamin. He was detained by one of his enemies, who happened to be captain of the gate. The princes accused him of deserting to the Chaldeans, a course which had now become common; and he was imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the scribe, where he remained for some time (chaps. 34 : 11-22; 37 : 11-15). Meanwhile his warnings were fulfilled by the return of the army of Nebuchadnezzar, who, according to Josephus, had defeated the Egyptians; though more probably the enemy retired without a battle. Zedekiah now sent secretly for Jeremiah, and asked him, "Is there any word from Jehovah?" "There is," replied the prophet; "thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon." Hoping, it would seem, for a more favorable answer, the king sent him back to the court of the prison, and ordered him to be fed while any bread was left in the city. In reply to another request which the king sent to him by Pashur and Zephaniah to inquire of Jehovah, the prophet pointed out a surrender as the only hope of safety (chap. 21). Upon this the princes demanded his death as a traitor, and the king confessed himself too weak to withstand them. They threw Jeremiah to perish in a hideous pit of the prison, where he sank into the mire; but the better feelings of the king came to his rescue at the intercession of the Ethiopian eunuch Ebed-melech, to whom he promised his life "for a prey" in the destruction of the city. Once more adjured by Zedekiah, in private, to give him counsel from God, the prophet pressed him to surrender; but the king was afraid of falling into the hands of the Jews who had revolted to Nebuchadnezzar, and who had doubtless many a wrong to avenge. So he entreated Jeremiah

to keep the interview a secret, and sent him back to the court of the prison, where he remained till Jerusalem was taken (37 : 14-28). That catastrophe was now at hand ; the ruin foreseen by Moses from the very birth of the nation, foretold by the prophets, and postponed for the sake of pious kings, as often as it was provoked by their degenerate successors ; held

in suspense in remembrance of God's oath to David, but brought down at last by the shameless, persistent, inveterate violation of His covenant of piety and purity by the chosen people. Jehovah had done all He could by His prophets, whose words they despised and misused their persons, "until the wrath of Jehovah arose against His people *till there was no remedy.*" P. S.

JEREMIAH, CHAPS. 27 AND 28.

*The Yokes and Hananiah.*

**27 : 1** In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, came  
 2 this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus saith the LORD to me : Make thee  
 3 bands and bars, and put them upon thy neck ; and send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the children of Ammon, and to the king of Tyre, and to the king of Sidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah  
 4 king of Judah ; and give them a charge unto their masters, saying, Thus saith the LORD of  
 5 hosts, the God of Israel : Thus shall ye say unto your masters ; I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the face of the earth, by my great power and by my outstretched arm ; and I give it unto whom it seemeth right unto me. And now have I given  
 6 all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant ; and the  
 7 beasts of the field also have I given him to serve him. And all the nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land come : and then many nations  
 8 and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and the kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed  
 9 them by his hand. But as for you, hearken ye not to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreams, nor to your soothsayers, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you,  
 10 saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon : for they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove  
 11 you far from your land ; and that I should drive you out and ye should perish. But the nation that shall bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, that nation will I let remain in their own land, saith the LORD ; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

12 And I spake to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your  
 13 necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the  
 14 LORD hath spoken concerning the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon ? And hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve  
 15 the king of Babylon ; for they prophesy a lie unto you. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, but they prophesy falsely in my name ; that I might drive you out, and that ye might  
 16 perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD : Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD's house shall now shortly be  
 17 brought again from Babylon : for they prophesy a lie unto you. Hearken not unto them ;  
 18 serve the king of Babylon, and live : wherefore should this city become a desolation ? But if they be prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and in the  
 19 house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning  
 20 the residue of the vessels that are left in this city, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah,  
 21 from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem ; yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the LORD,  
 22 and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem : They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be, until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD ; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

**28 : 1** And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azzur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I  
 3 have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took  
 4 away from this place, and carried them to Babylon : and I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went to  
 5 Babylon, saith the LORD : for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the

presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD, even the prophet Jeremiah  
 6 said, Amen : the LORD do so : the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to  
 bring again the vessels of the LORD's house, and all them of the captivity, from Babylon  
 7 unto this place. Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the  
 8 ears of all the people : The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophe-  
 9 sied against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pesti-  
 10 lence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come  
 11 to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him. Then Hana-  
 12 niah the prophet took the bar from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. And  
 Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD : Even so will  
 I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon within two full years from off the neck  
 12 of all the nations. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. Then the word of the LORD  
 came unto Jeremiah, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the bar from off the neck of  
 13 the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Go, and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD : Thou  
 14 hast broken the bars of wood ; but thou shalt make in their stead bars of iron. For thus  
 saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all  
 these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon ; and they shall serve  
 15 him : and I have given him the beasts of the field also. Then said the prophet Jeremiah  
 unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah ; the LORD hath not sent thee ; but thou  
 16 makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will send thee  
 away from off the face of the earth : this year thou shalt die, because thou hast spoken rebel-  
 17 lion against the LORD. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

**27 : 1.** In the first verse, which purports to give the date of this prophecy, there is manifestly an error of some ancient transcriber in writing Jehoiakim for Zedekiah. That this *is* an error is manifest, for verse 3 assumes that Zedekiah is now king ; verse 12 shows that the prophet bore this message personally to Zedekiah ; verse 20 proves that the captivity of Jeconiah, son and successor of Jehoiakim, is past ; and finally chap. 28 : 1 states that *the same year* was in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah. It is then a simple matter of fact that the ancient transcribers of the sacred text were liable to mistakes, and did sometimes make them. That form of inspiration which preserved the original authors of the Scriptures from any vital error in doctrine did not reach all the transcribers to preserve them from all mistake in their transcripts. Compared with any other ancient document, the Scriptures are remarkably free from this sort of error. Where errors have occurred, the means of correction are generally, as here, at command. This chapter then dates in the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah. H. C.

The prophecies contained both in this and the following chapter belong to the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. About this time ambassadors came to Zedekiah from the kings of Edom, Moab and other neighboring nations, to solicit him to join with them in a confederacy against the king of Babylon. On this occasion Jeremiah is ordered to put bands and yokes about his neck, and to send them afterward to the before-mentioned kings, declaring the sovereignty of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors to be of Divine appointment, and promising peace and protection to those who submitted quietly, but menacing evil in case of resistance (verses

1-11). A like admonition is delivered to Zedekiah, advising him not to expose himself and his people to certain ruin, by listening to the suggestions of false prophets, and revolting from the service of the king of Babylon (verses 12-15). The priests and all the people are also warned not to give credit to the false prophets, who taught them to expect a speedy restoration of the vessels, which had been carried away to Babylon together with Jeconiah. Instead of which it is foretold that the remaining vessels in the house of God, and in the king's house at Jerusalem, should be carried after the other, and should not be brought back till the appointed time of Judah's captivity was at an end (verse 16 to the end). *Blayney.*

**2. Make thee bonds and yokes.** The prophets foreshadowed things by actions as well as by words. So Isaiah went "naked and barefoot" (Isa. 20 : 3). Ezekiel prophesied in like manner by signs (4 : 1, etc.). *W. Louth.*

**2, 3.** Can there be any question whether these bonds and yokes were merely seen in vision, or were actually made? How could yokes be sent in vision by the hand of ambassadors to the kings of Edom and Moab? How could those kings know anything about the prophet's vision? Were the consequent transactions of the next chapter, where Hananiah takes off the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and breaks it, also done in vision? And did his death, in judgment therefor, occur in vision only? Manifestly those events of prophetic life which were interwoven with the outward life of other men must have been transacted in the external world. And we shall not be misled if we follow the simple rule that things done in vision are said to be *shown* and *seen* only, while things *done* in the outward world and in actual life

are plainly stated to be *done*, as here : " *Make thee bonds and yokes.*" The Bible is eminently a plain book, written for the common mind, and to be interpreted accordingly.

**9-11.** In those nations the word of the Lord might be gainsayed by their false prophets in the form of diviners, dreamers, soothsayers, etc., as was done by false prophets in Judah. The Lord warns them to put no confidence in those gainsayers and liars. Men claiming supernatural powers are an institution in all heathen nations, and, so far as history enables us to judge, have always been so in all ages and in every clime. If it be not precisely a demand and outgrowth of human nature, it is a law of human depravity and a perpetual adjunct of a sinning race so long as they are led captive by Satan at his will.

**12, 13.** Here the message comes to the king and people of Judah, Why should they fall under the general doom denounced on the nations that would not serve the king of Babylon? H. C.—"Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die—thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?" This was the purport of the message which Jeremiah delivered before King Zedekiah and his court, and of which, when once delivered, his continuing to wear the yoke in public was a standing memorial, continually reminding those who saw it of the declaration which it symbolized and embodied. He even appeared with it in the Temple, to the inner courts of which he as a priest had access. *Kitto.*

**16, 17.** A portion of the sacred vessels of the Temple had been taken away to Babylon with Jehoiachin. The false prophets were assuring the people that these vessels would soon be brought back. The Lord warns them against putting any confidence in such declarations. "Serve the king of Babylon and live" means, "And so ye shall live"—the second verb being a promise.

**18.** The people might have a test of the reliability of these prophets, and one that could be applied very soon. Bid them intercede with God to prevent the vessels of the Temple and palace yet remaining from being taken to Babylon. If they had power with God, let them improve and show it in this point. The question must soon come to issue, for the final destruction of the city, Temple and palace was at hand.

**19-22.** All that had not been taken away with the young king, Jehoiachin, when after a three months' reign he was borne captive to Babylon, would soon be taken away—viz., at the close of the then present reign of Zedekiah. Yet, for the comfort of those who waited humbly on the Lord, He assured them that those vessels would be brought back again and restored to their place—a sacred pledge of the restoration of a remnant of the people and of the re-establishment of Divine worship in its ancient home.

**Chap. 28.** The chapter is especially valuable for its minute description of the case of Hananiah, one of the false prophets, who labored zealously to counteract the influence of the true prophets of the Lord. This case may stand as a sample of the class, an illustration of the methods pursued by those mischievous and wicked men.

**1.** What is said to have occurred in the "beginning of the reign of Zedekiah" is more definitely set to his fourth year and fifth month. The Jews used the phrases, "the beginning" and the "latter end," to denote in a general way the early part and the latter part. In this case, since Zedekiah reigned eleven years, events in his fourth year would be in the former, the early part, or "the beginning." This transaction was public, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people in the Temple.

**2-4.** Thus did this false prophet labor directly to gainsay and deny what Jeremiah had been saying. Observe, he does not shrink from using the solemn and prophetic forms of announcement: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel," and this in the very face of the stern prohibition of God Himself. His special points are that God says He has broken the yoke of the king of Babylon; that within two full years He will restore all the sacred vessels taken from the Temple to Babylon with Jeconiah, and will bring back Jeconiah himself. This indicates a degree of boldness and daring in falsehood which can scarcely be accounted for without supposing the presence and inspiration of the "father of lies."

**5, 6.** This first reply of Jeremiah is not to be considered as prophecy or as a message from the Lord. He does not prefix to it the formula of a Divine message, "Thus saith the Lord." He means only this: I shall be as well pleased as yourself to see all the sacred vessels of the Temple restored and all the captives brought back.

**7-9.** This part of Jeremiah's reply mildly suggests that there have been prophets in former ages, and that the test of their Divine

mission has always been the fulfilment of their predictions.

**10, 11.** Determined to be behind the true prophets in none of the methods used by them to deepen the impression of their words, Hananiah takes the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and breaks it. This symbolic act should naturally indicate that the Lord had reversed His purpose, and would break the power of Babylon within two years. Consequently until that time this test of fulfilment could not be applied to prove him a false prophet. Jeremiah here withdraws, having no further special message from the Lord to deliver. As the case stands, there is nothing more for him to do. Two years elapsed will show Hananiah to be a lying prophet—if the Lord shall see fit to wait so long. Jeremiah had nothing to do but wait for that time, or at least for some further commission from the Lord.

**15-17.** The daring hardihood and blasphemy of Hananiah called for signal retribution.

Hence another solemn message from the Lord, first forewarning, then smiting. The warning was given in the fifth month (verse 1). The fatal blow fell in the seventh, with only two months' delay, giving him time for reflection and repentance, as the usage of human courts fixes a future day for execution, to give the culprit time for thought and for preparation to die. H. C.—**So Hananiah the prophet died the same year, in the seventh month.** This simple record of the result has always seemed to us unequalled in that simplicity which rises to grandeur. Here is no carefulness of minute statement as to exact fulfilment; no call to admiration at the effect of the Lord's judgment. "So Hananiah died;" that is all. There is a world of meaning in that "so"—indicating that it was simply the most natural and inevitable thing in the world that Hananiah should die—nothing at all to marvel at that he did die—when his doom had been thus denounced. *Kitto.*

#### JEREMIAH, CHAP. 34.

##### *Manumission and Re-enslavement of Servants.*

- 34 : 1** THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth that were under his dominion, and all the peoples, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying :
- 2** Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Go, and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon,
- 3** and he shall burn it with fire : and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand ; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon,
- 4** and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah : thus saith the LORD concerning thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword ; thou shalt die in peace ; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they make a burning for thee ; and they shall lament thee, *saying*, Ah lord ! for I have spoken the word, saith the LORD. Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem, when the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish and against Azekah ; for these *alone* remained of the cities of Judah as fenced cities.
- 8** The word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them ; that every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free ; that none should serve himself of them, *to wit*, of a Jew his brother :
- 10** and all the princes and all the people obeyed, which had entered into the covenant, that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more ; they obeyed, and let them go : but afterwards they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids : therefore the word of the LORD came
- 13** to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel : I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, At the end of seven years ye shall let go every man his brother that is an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee, and hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee : but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear.
- 15** And ye were now turned, and had done that which is right in mine eyes, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour ; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name : but ye turned and profaned my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had let go free at their pleasure, to return ; and ye brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. Therefore thus saith the LORD : Ye have not hearkened unto me, to proclaim liberty, every man to his brother, and every man to his neighbour : behold, I proclaim unto you a liberty, saith the

LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine ; and I will make you to be tossed to 18 and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before 19 me, when they cut the calf in twain and passed between the parts thereof ; the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the 20 land, which passed between the parts of the calf ; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life : and their dead bodies shall be 21 for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from 22 you. Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city ; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire : and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.

THIS chapter contains two distinct portions. This first part (verses 1-7) predicts the capture of the city and of its king by the Chaldeans ; specifies distinctly that King Zedekiah would personally be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and would see him face to face, yet would not die by the sword, and would have at his death the usual honors of the earlier Jewish kings. This passage closely resembles chap. 32 : 3, 5, and, therefore, probably bears the same date, and is essentially the same message. The second portion gives the history of a remarkable manumission of Hebrew servants and their subjection again to servitude. King Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people, and with the princes, to set free their Hebrew servants and handmaids. They did so ; but subsequently forced them all back into bondage. The Lord denounced judgments upon them for this sin. Verses 21, 22, taken in connection with other known facts in their history, give us a clew to the circumstances under which both this manumission and the subsequent re-enslavement took place. The history (especially chap. 37) shows that after the Chaldeans had commenced the siege of Jerusalem, the Egyptians sent forward an army to aid their Jewish friends, and to act against the Chaldeans ; that the latter, hearing of their approach, raised the siege and marched against the Egyptian army ; but subsequently, after driving them back, returned to the siege and captured the city. In God's threatening of judgment on Jerusalem for re-enslaving her manumitted servants, He says (chap. 34 : 21, 22) : " I will give Zedekiah and his princes into the hand of the king of Babylon's army *which are gone up from you.*" Also, " Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city, and they shall fight against it and take it." Hence this threatened judgment, recorded in the latter portion of the chapter, was revealed to the prophet before the Chaldeans resumed the siege. And, moreover, there can be no doubt that this general manumission was

made after the siege of the city had commenced, or, at least, after it had become morally certain ; and that the measure was *prudent*, its objects being probably twofold—viz., to propitiate the favor of God, and to gain the good-will and the more effective service of the freedmen in defence of the city. Then, upon the withdrawal of the Chaldean forces, the fears of the people subsided, and consequently they re-enslaved their freedmen and brought on themselves the curse of the Almighty, who loves to show Himself the God and Father of the oppressed. H. C.

4, 5. " *Thou shalt not die by the sword.*" He did not die by the sword, he did not fall in battle. " *But thou shalt die in peace.*" He did die in peace ; he expired neither on the rack nor on the scaffold ; was neither strangled nor poisoned—no unusual fate of captive kings ; he died peaceably in his bed, though that bed was in a prison. " *And with the burnings of thy fathers shall they burn odors for thee.*" It cannot be proved from history that this part of the prophecy was accomplished, though the probability is that it was so ; the probability is grounded on these two reasons : Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, to say nothing of other Jews, were men of great authority in the court of the king of Babylon before and after the commencement of the imprisonment of Zedekiah ; and Daniel continued in power till the subversion of the kingdom of Babylon by Cyrus. Now it seems very probable that Daniel and the other Jews would have both inclination to request, and influence enough with the king of Babylon to obtain, permission to bury their deceased prince, Zedekiah, after the manner of his fathers. But if there had been no Jews at Babylon of consequence enough to make such a request, still it is probable that the king of Babylon would have ordered the Jews to bury and lament their king after the manner of their country. *Bp. Watson.*—Comparing what is said here of Zedekiah's death with what is said of Jehoiakim (chap.

22 : 18, 19), the former is decidedly the more honored and the less despicable. Jehoiakim stands on the page of history supremely wicked, mean and despised. Zedekiah had some to mourn his death.

**7.** Lachish and Azekah were strong cities, and, like Jerusalem, required to be reduced by siege. They were in the southwest part of Judah. Lachish withstood Sennacherib in the times of Hezekiah. The history (2 Chron. 32 : 9) states that "he laid siege against it with all his power," and even remained himself to direct the operations there, while he sent his subordinate officers to Jerusalem. This celebrated siege is supposed by Layard to be depicted on certain slabs disinterred from the ruins of Nineveh. H. C.

**8. To proclaim liberty unto them.**

By the law of Moses, the Israelites were not allowed to detain their brethren of the Hebrew race in perpetual bondage, but were required to let them go free after having served six years. This law had fallen into disuse, but King Zedekiah, upon the approach of the Chaldean army, whether from religious motives or a political view to employ the men who were set free in the service of the war, engaged the people to act conformably to the law ; and they released their brethren accordingly. But no sooner were their fears abated by the retreat of the Chaldeans than, in defiance of every principle of religion, honor and humanity, they imposed the yoke of servitude anew upon those unhappy persons (verse 11). *Bayney.*

**14.** Hebrews of either sex, compelled by the necessities of subsistence to attach themselves to the household of some one who had wealth enough to give them employment and bread, were to have the opportunity after six years' service of becoming free. The tone of Lev. 25 shows that such cases were often the result of debt and misfortune, from which a man could not extricate himself so as to gain subsistence in any other way. He must anticipate his earnings by selling his labor in advance. These Hebrew statutes originated in God's regard for the interests and rights of the poor. Hence He guarded and enforced them with a vigilance and beneficence worthy of an infinite Father. These statutes had fallen into neglect. For many years past the people had not hearkened to the voice of God in this matter. How long they had been disregarded does not appear from the history ; probably during the administration of all their apostate kings.

**15, 16.** In this recital of the case by the

Lord Himself He shows that they had done right in releasing their servants according to the law, that they had made that covenant in His own Temple and under the most solemn religious sanctions ; and that in turning back to violate this covenant they had polluted the very name of Jehovah their God. The original word used here implies that they had recklessly abused and contemned that sacred name. H. C.—As soon as ever they let their servants go free, God let them go free. When they began to think themselves safe from the besiegers, they made their servants come back into subjection to them (verse 11, and again verse 16). This was a great abuse to their servants, to whom servitude would be more irksome after they had had some taste of the pleasures of liberty. It was a great shame to themselves, that they could not keep in a good mind when they were in it. But it was especially an affront to God ; in doing this they *polluted His name* (verse 16). It was a contempt of the command He had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it, or break it, as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with Him, and of that wrath which they had imprecated on themselves, in case they should break that covenant. H.

**17.** The terms of the threatening correspond to the terms which express the sin. As the people would not proclaim liberty to their oppressed brethren, God would proclaim liberty to the sword, the pestilence, and the famine to do their work of destruction upon the guilty oppressors. This form of statement serves to bind together the punishment and the sin, so that the form of announcing the punishment should perpetually remind them of the sin for which it was sent. Hence, when the people saw and felt the sword, the pestilence, and the famine, coming down upon themselves with the fullest liberty and with no restraint, they would remember that they had given no liberty to the poor servants whom the Lord bade them set free. When the oppressed poor had none among the kings and great men of the earth to plead their cause and avenge their wrongs, the Lord Almighty came down and *the thing was done!* done to purpose ; done with terrible vengeance ! H. C.

**22. I will cause them to return.**

They did return, reinvested the city, and after an obstinate defence took it, plundered it, and burned it to the ground, taking captives Zedekiah and his princes. A. C.



## JEREMIAH'S FAITHFUL TESTIMONY AND IMPRISONMENT.

## JEREMIAH, CHAPS. 21, 37 AND 38.

- 21** : 1 THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashhur the son of Malchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,
- 2 Inquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us ; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us : peradventure the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.
- 3, 4 Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah : Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans which besiege you, without the walls, and I will gather them into the midst of this city. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast : they shall die of a great pestilence. And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, even such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life : and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword ; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy. And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD : Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence : but he that goeth out, and falleth away to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. For I have set my face upon this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD : it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.
- 11, 12 And touching the house of the king of Judah, hear ye the word of the LORD : O house of David, thus saith the LORD, Execute judgement in the morning, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings. Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and of the rock of the plain, saith the LORD ; ye which say, Who shall come down against us ? or who shall enter into our habitations ? and I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD : and I will kindle a fire in her forest, and it shall devour all that is round about her.
- 37** : 1 And Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned as king, instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah.
- 3 And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us.
- 4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people : for they had not put him into prison. And Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt : and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they brake up from Jerusalem. Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel : Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me ; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.
- 8 And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city ; and they shall take it, and burn it with fire. Thus saith the LORD : Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us : for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.
- 11 And it came to pass that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to receive his portion there, in the midst of the people. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah ; and he laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. Then said Jeremiah, It is false ; I fall not away to the Chaldeans ; but he hearkened not to him : so Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. And the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe ; for they had made that the prison. When Jeremiah was come into the dungeon house, and into the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days ; then Zedekiah the king sent, and fetched him : and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD ? And Jeremiah said, There is. He said also, Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, Wherein have I sinned against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison ? Where now are your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land ? And now hear, I pray thee, O my lord the king : let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee ; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. Then Zedekiah the king commanded, and they committed Jeremiah into the court of the guard, and they gave him daily a loaf of bread out of the bakers' street.

until all the bread in the city was spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

38 : 1 And Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah spake  
 2 unto all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence : but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall  
 3 live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey, and he shall live. Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and he shall take  
 4 it. Then the princes said unto the king, Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death ; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of  
 5 all the people, in speaking such words unto them : for this man seeketh not the welfare of this  
 6 people, but the hurt. And Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand : for the king  
 7 is not he that can do anything against you. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the  
 8 dungeon of Malchiah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard : and they let down  
 9 Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire ; and Jeremiah sank  
 10 in the mire. Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, an eunuch, which was in the king's  
 11 house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon ; the king then sitting in the gate of  
 12 Benjamin ; Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,  
 13 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the  
 14 prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon ; and he is like to die in the place where he  
 15 is because of the famine : for there is no more bread in the city. Then the king commanded  
 16 Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jerem-  
 17 iah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. So Ebed-melech took the men with  
 18 him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast cloths  
 19 and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. And Ebed-  
 20 melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast cloths and rotten rags under  
 21 thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. So they drew up Jeremiah with the  
 22 cords, and took him up out of the dungeon ; and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.  
 23 Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry  
 24 that is in the house of the LORD : and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing ;  
 25 hide nothing from me. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt  
 26 thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken unto me.  
 27 So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made  
 28 us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men  
 29 that seek thy life. Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts,  
 30 the God of Israel : If thou wilt go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul  
 31 shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire ; and thou shalt live, and thine house :  
 32 but if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given  
 33 into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out  
 34 of their hand. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are  
 35 fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me. But  
 36 Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, in  
 37 that which I speak unto thee : so it shall be well with thee, and thy soul shall live. But if  
 38 thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath shewed me : Behold, all the women  
 39 that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's  
 40 princes, and those women shall say, Thy familiar friends have set thee on, and have prevailed  
 41 over thee : now that thy feet are sunk in the mire, they are turned away back. And they  
 42 shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans : and thou shalt not escape out  
 43 of their hand, but shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon : and thou shalt cause  
 44 this city to be burned with fire. Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of  
 45 these words, and thou shalt not die. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee,  
 46 and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto  
 47 the king ; hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death : also what the king said  
 48 unto thee : then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that  
 49 he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. Then came all the princes  
 50 unto Jeremiah, and asked him : and he told them according to all these words that the king  
 51 had commanded. So they left off speaking with him ; for the matter was not perceived.  
 52 So Jeremiah abode in the court of the guard until the day that Jerusalem was taken.

*The part taken by the prophet Jeremiah, and the cause of his imprisonment.* It is certain that Jeremiah sided throughout with the Babylonish party, not only in Josiah's reign, but through the succeeding reigns of Jehohaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. He could not but see the broken and iniquitous condition of his people. And this, with his inspired foresight of God's chastening purposes, led him to use his utmost endeavor that Judah's kings and

people should not unnecessarily exasperate the Babylonish monarch. He would save them from all possible aggravation of wickedness as well as useless resistance, and thus from consequent suffering. Hence the enmity of the Egyptian party in the capital, often during the twenty years of these closing reigns, endangered the prophet's life. Protected he was, however, up to the last siege of Jerusalem ; partly by his manifest prophetic office, and

partly by the friends God raised up—by the kings themselves, or by priestly and noble defenders. His imprisonment occurred toward the end of Zedekiah's reign, about eighteen months before the final crisis of the kingdom, when Jerusalem was destroyed and the remaining people carried captive to Babylon. Zedekiah, a weak rather than wicked king, yielding to the Egyptian party, had been persuaded to renounce subjection to the king of Babylon, and enter into alliance with Egypt. B.—It is evident that Zedekiah was well affected toward Jeremiah; for he thrice asked his advice, first by a public embassy (21 : 1 ; 37 : 3) and subsequently in secret (37 : 17 ; 38 : 14) ; but he was far too weak a man to be capable of energetic action in his behalf, and so allowed him to be imprisoned and persecuted. The city had been besieged by the Chaldeans, and was tottering to its fall, when the approach of the Egyptian army gave the inhabitants hope of aid ; and for a short time the Chaldeans departed from Jerusalem. Then Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah, asking him to pray unto the Lord for them, probably expecting that he would intercede for the city, as Isaiah had done in the days of Hezekiah (Isa. 37 : 6). Jeremiah's answer was more unfavorable than he had given before. It was that the Egyptians would accomplish nothing, and that the Chaldeans would return and take the city. The princes were angry with Jeremiah, smote him, and put him in prison. Zedekiah, on the renewal of the siege, sent and took him out, and secretly ordered him brought to his palace, where he again consulted him, but with the same result. Jeremiah prays for milder treatment. Zedekiah, who was of a kindly disposition and remembered Jeremiah as an honored prophet in the days of his father, now gives him roomy quarters in the court of the guard, where he wrote the cheerful prophecy contained in chaps. 30-33 ; and as provisions were growing scarce, the king ordered that a loaf of bread should be given him every day. The purpose of the princes was frustrated by his removal to the guard-house, as there his friends had free access to him. B. C.

**Chap. 21.** This chapter contains the first of those prophecies, which were delivered by Jeremiah subsequent to the revolt of Zedekiah, and the breaking out of the war thereupon ; and which are continued on to the taking of Jerusalem. The terms of this message seem to imply that the king of Babylon had but just commenced his hostilities against Judah, of which Zedekiah informs the prophet, as of a matter that might not have come to his certain

knowledge ; and desires him to intercede with God, that He would divert the storm by some such extraordinary interposition as He had been wont to manifest in favor of His people. *Blayney.*—The Lord's answer through His prophet was very categorical, decisive and appalling, still leaving an open door, however, for hope on the one sole condition that the king and his people would thoroughly repent and reform their ways. Even at this late hour salvation was possible on these only righteous conditions.

**8-10.** This gives the people to understand distinctly that the city is doomed to destruction, and that their only hope of personal safety lies in going out and giving themselves up to the Chaldeans. This is a clear illustration of the language elsewhere used of the moral choice which the Lord sets before men between the way of life and the way of death—*e.g.*, De. 30 : 15-20 and Josh. 24 : 14-24. H. C.

**8. Set before you the way of life and the way of death.** The impression of every scene, of every lesson, of every folly is pushing you on to some decision—whether you will serve God or not, whether you will consecrate your life to its true end or not. On, on rolls the tide of hours, days and years, swifter and stronger in current, setting more resistless toward the cataract. Moment flows into moment, melts into the mass and is lost to view, but every drop swells the flood that presses you to the final issue. *Gillett.*

There are two courses in life. There are *but two*. The two are utterly irreconcilable and discordant. You cannot have them both. It must be one thing or the other. The choice is really made, degradingly and disgracefully by the very act of refraining from choosing. But if you would be men, *choose, determine!* I do not need to contemplate the possibility of anybody here saying, " You have set before me life and death, and I solemnly and deliberately choose death ;" but I beseech you, take care that you do not slip into the choice of the worse part before you know where you are, and that years of careless yielding to circumstances and temptations do not at last rob you of the power to resolve that your life shall ever be otherwise moulded than by external forces. A. M.

Oh, if we could realize to ourselves who we are, and where ! placed on what a mighty eminence of blessing ; raised to what a height of privilege and hope ; walking along what a narrow ridge of duty ; beset by what terrible enemies ; helped by what a wonderful indwell-

ing Presence ; travelling onward with a steady pace, which no power or skill of man can check or stay, to what a certain, an irreversible, an endless doom ! Like a ship pressing with full sail into an unknown sea, with a thick mist around her, we are pressing into the future : we cannot stay—we cannot pause—we can furl no sails—we can let out no anchors ; on we must go, and on we are going to find our rock, our quicksand or our harbor. *Bp. Moberly.*

**Chap. 37.** The date of this chapter falls during the reign of Zedekiah, and within the last eighteen months of his reign—*i. e.*, within the period of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. It refers specially to the historic fact that during the progress of this siege the king of Egypt approached with an army for the relief of his own allies. Whereupon the Chaldeans raised the siege and marched against the Egyptians. In the result the Egyptians returned to their own country. The Chaldeans reinvaded Jerusalem and ultimately took it. Precisely at what stage of the siege this diversion by the Egyptians occurred or how long the siege was suspended in consequence, we are not told. While they were absent Jeremiah took the opportunity to leave the city, was arrested at the city gate, and thrown into close confinement.

**6-10.** The imperilled Jews and their king were ready to grasp the faintest shadow of hope from this approach of an Egyptian army. But the Lord was against them. Hence no earthly power could save them from destruction. It was of the Lord's mercy that He promptly and solemnly warned them against deceiving themselves with this vain hope. Such hope lessened the pressure of motive on their minds to repent before God and seek His favor. Hence the promptness and decision of this assurance that help from that quarter was vain. H. C.

**12-21.** We have here a further account concerning Jeremiah, who relates more passages concerning himself than any other of the prophets ; for the histories of the lives and sufferings of God's ministers have been very serviceable to the Church, as well as their preaching and writing. H.

**12. Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem.** The investing army having withdrawn, communication was again opened between the city and the adjacent country. **To go into the land of Benjamin.** Jeremiah's patrimony lay in Anathoth, in the tribe of Benjamin (Jer. 1 : 1), which was one of the cities assigned to the priests in the time

of Joshua (Josh. 21 : 17, 18). **To receive his portion there,** or, "from thence." It was evidently some matter of business connected with his paternal estate. It could hardly have been his purpose to remain in so exposed a situation, when the Chaldeans should return as he confidently expected (Jer. 37 : 8-10). Jeremiah steadfastly insisted upon sharing the fortunes of his countrymen even after the fall of the city, in spite of the tempting offers that were made to him of a comfortable home in Babylon (Jer. 40 : 4, 6) ; and it is not probable that he meant to desert them now.

**15. And the princes smote him, and put him in prison.** In spite of his protestations, he was adjudged guilty, beaten and imprisoned. W. H. G.—The charge of intended desertion was a mere excuse for wreaking their malice on him. They hated Jeremiah because he had steadily opposed the popular determination to fight, and had foretold disaster. Add to that that he had held up a high standard of religion and morality to a corrupt and idolatrous people, and his "unpopularity" is sufficiently explained. A. M.

**16. When Jeremiah was come into the dungeon house.** Literally, as in the margin, "house of the pit." This pit, or cistern, is not further described, except as a place where Jeremiah was likely to perish (verse 20). The miserable plight in which he was in another filthy dungeon, into which he was subsequently thrust, is detailed somewhat at length in Jer. 38 : 6 sqq. W. H. G.

The princes were the power behind the throne. They hated Jeremiah. Although they might differ in many things from the priests and the false prophets, they agreed with them in detesting this stern, truth-telling man, as Pilate and Herod were made friends by their common hostility to Christ. The princes, too, held the sympathies of the populace, for all were united in a frenzy of fear and in opposition to the man who deservedly condemned them all. The hatred was political as well as personal and moral ; and political passions are very likely to become virulent. The princes still clung, with stubborn conservatism, to the exhausted protection of Egypt. Jeremiah, instructed by God, counselled temporary surrender to Babylon ; and no wonder, since that would be no more than a recognition of existing facts. It must be remembered, too, that the courtly party remaining in Jerusalem and Judah was only a remnant. The strongest of the princes had been deported to Babylon, where, with Jehoiachin and his household, they re-

mained respected in imprisonment. Those left behind were but refuse. It is not surprising that these weak, base men were nagging the one great citizen surviving in the kingdom. Ezekiel and Daniel were among the exiles in Babylon. Jeremiah was practically alone in Judah. The party that had formerly been friendly to him was disintegrated and scattered. As for the rest, gnats, as they prefer carrion, enjoy the attempt to worry a lion to death. But the lion is, after all, the hero of that whole period of Hebrew history. Jeremiah belongs to the rare company who, when they do well, suffer for it, and yet take it patiently (1 Pet. 2 : 20). They are too good for this world, but acceptable with God. Persecution is now uncommon; the world has softened and grown wiser. Perhaps the average Christian, too, is less scrupulous and less brave. But it is still a poor type of piety which is popular with worldliness. *McPherson.*

**17.** After many days' confinement in this horrible dungeon underground, the king took him out and asked him secretly if there was any word from the Lord. The prophet's circumstances were at this time such as would most thoroughly test his loyalty to his Divine Lord. He had every earthly inducement to please the king; yet he fearlessly announced the king's terrible doom from the Lord, "Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon." Prison discipline had not unnerved his steadfast purpose to be true to his God. He had an earnest personal plea to make for his liberty and his life. He wisely put this plea on its own bottom—an humble appeal to the king's sense of justice and feelings of compassion. He could not swerve from his fidelity to God for the sake of even liberty or life.

**18, 19.** What is my offence? I have only told you the truth, one proof of which you may yourself see; for where are those false prophets that gainsayed my words and belied the Lord, saying, "The king of Babylon shall not come up against this city and land?" Let the king look at the facts, and he will see that so far all my predictions have proved true. Why, then, should he count me his enemy for telling him the truth? H. C.—In Jeremiah's answer we may note, as equally prominent and beautifully blended, respect, submission, consciousness of peril and impending death, and unshaken boldness. He knew that his life was at the disposal of the capricious, feeble Zedekiah. He bows before him as his subject, and brings his "supplication;" but not one jot of his message will he abate, nor smooth down its terribleness an

atom. He repeats as unfalteringly as ever the assurance that the king of Babylon will take the city. He asserts his own innocence as regards king and courtiers and people; and he asks what has become of all the smooth-tongued prophets of prosperity, as if he had bid the king look over the city wall and see the tokens of their lies and of Jeremiah's truth in the investing lines of the all but victorious enemy. Such a combination of perfect meekness and perfect courage, unstained loyalty to his king, and supreme obedience to his God, was only possible to a man who lived in very close communion with Jehovah, and had learned thereby to fear none else, because he feared Him so well, and to reverence all else whom He had set in places of reverence. True courage, of the pattern which befits God's servants, is ever gentle. Bluster is the sign of weakness. A. M.

**21.** The king acceded to his request. By the king's command Jeremiah was committed "into the court of the guard." This was a court connected with a portion of the palace, which was used as a prison (Jer. 32 : 2). He was still in custody, but in much more comfortable quarters than those which he had previously occupied. W. H. G.

**And they gave him daily a loaf of bread.** He had interest enough in the prophet to interfere for his comfort, and to have him put into better quarters in the palace and provided with a "circle" (a round loaf) of bread out of Baker Street, as long as there was any in the city—not a very long time. But why did he do so much, and not do more? He knew that Jeremiah was innocent, and that his word was God's; and what he should have done was to have shaken off his masterful "servants," followed his conscience, and obeyed God. Why did he not? Because he was a coward, infirm of purpose, and therefore unstable as water. He is another of the tragic examples with which all life as well as Scripture is studded, of how much evil is possible to a weak character. In this world, where there are so many temptations to be bad, no man will be good who cannot strongly say "No." The virtue of strength of will may be but like the rough fence round young trees to keep cattle from browsing on them and east winds from blighting them. But the fence is needed, if the trees are to grow. "To be weak is to be miserable," and sinful, too, generally. "Whom resist" must be the motto for all noble, God-like, and God-pleasing life. A. M.

**38 : 1-4.** Jeremiah persists in his plain preaching; what he had many a time said, he

still says (verse 3), *This city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon*; though it hold out long, it will be taken at last; so that every man might have his own life given him for a prey if he would be advised (verse 2). The princes persist in their malice against Jeremiah. They represented him to the king as a dangerous man, disaffected to his country and government; *he seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt*—an unjust insinuation, for no man had laid out himself more for the good of Jerusalem than he had done. H.—This charge of high treason kept out of view the counsel of the Lord, and gave no credit to Jeremiah's claim of being sent of God to say these very words. It was not strange that, from their wicked standpoint, they should take the view they did. The strangeness and the guilt all lie in their disregard of the manifest proofs that Jeremiah spake from the Lord. The worst fact in their case was, that they had no heart to hear what God had said. In this lay their damning sin. Most righteously this became their ruin. H. C.

**5. The king is not he that can do anything against you.** The king evidently speaks this in disgust with the princes for endeavoring to frustrate his clemency. He had once rescued Jeremiah out of their hands, and taken him under his royal protection. But his prerogative, he tells them, was likely to avail but little, when opposed by their obstinate and repeated importunities. The power was in reality theirs, and not his. *Blayney*.

**7-9.** Among all the royal household, and throughout the king's court, no one is found to exhibit the spirit of the good Samaritan save this Ethiopian eunuch. The subsequent notice of him (39:15-18) shows that he put his trust in the Lord, a man of true piety, whom the Lord graciously preserved amid the general slaughter of the king's household. To all the other discomforts and miseries of the prophet's situation was added hunger. On this plea specially the eunuch urges the king to order his release, for at this time no bread remained in the city (cf. 37:21). H. C.—Ebed-melech was an Ethiopian, a *stranger to the commonwealth of Israel*, and yet had in him more humanity, and more divinity too, than native Israelites had. Christ found more faith among Gentiles than among Jews. Ebed-melech lived in a wicked court and in a very corrupt, degenerate age, and yet had a great sense both of equity and piety. God has His remnant in all places, among all sorts. There were *saints* even in *Cæsar's household*. H.

**17, 18.** This message the prophet had re-

peatedly given to the king and to his people: The Lord had fully purposed that the nation, unless saved by repentance, must fall before the Chaldean power. Their national pride repelled this advice; their infatuation plunged them deep in destruction. H. C.—The advice of Jeremiah clearly proves that the destruction of Zedekiah was not so determined but that he might have prevented it. The Divine threatenings and predictions and God's knowledge of futurity do not deprive men of their liberty, since the evils with which they are threatened are brought on them by their own fault. *Osterwald*.

**19, 20.** Some of Zedekiah's people had already gone over to the Chaldeans against the will of their king, but according to the counsel of the Lord. The king anticipates and fears their taunts if he were to humble himself so low as to follow them. They might say, "And you too have come at last!" He is afraid the Chaldeans will deliver him into the hands of those Jews whom he would fain have punished for treason, and from whom he might therefore not unnaturally fear rough treatment. But it is always safe to obey God—a lesson which this king, alas! was slow to learn. H. C.

**20-23.** The pressing importunity with which Jeremiah followed the advice he had given the king. He assures him that if he would comply with the will of God herein the thing he feared should not come upon him (verse 20). *Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord*, because it is His voice, so it *shall be well unto thee*. But he tells him what would be the consequence if he would not obey. He himself would *fall into the hands of the Chaldeans*, as implacable enemies, whom he might now make his friends, by throwing himself into their hands. H.

**24-27.** It was due to his timid fear of his princes (a fear unworthy of a king) that he devised this scheme for suppressing a part of the truth as to what had passed between himself and Jeremiah. A somewhat nice question of morals arises in cases of this sort on the point whether we are bound to tell the *whole truth* to men who demand it for a bad purpose; and if not, how far it is morally right to give or to favor the impression that we have told the whole truth when we have not. The latter is really the delicate point, for we readily assent to the doctrine that we are not bound, even though questioned, to tell all we know to all men under all circumstances.

**28.** *So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken:*

and he was there when Jerusalem was taken. This "court of the prison" was probably a less severe and close confinement than either "his dungeon and cabin" in the house of Jonathan (37 : 15, 16, 20) or the pit of mire, known as "the dungeon of Malchiah" (38 : 6-13). The original words might well be rendered, "The court of the guard-house." In this state his friends seem to have had access to him, and he announced to them the words of the Lord. (Compare chap. 37 : 21 with chap. 38 : 1-3). H. C.

*Jeremiah's Purchase of a Field. His Prayer. His Prediction of Jerusalem's Overthrow and Subsequent Rebuilding.*

*Jeremiah, Chap. 32.*

- 1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of  
 2 Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. Now at that time the king of  
 3 Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem : and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of  
 3 the guard, which was in the king of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut  
 4 him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will  
 4 give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it ; and Zedekiah king  
 5 of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into  
 5 the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes  
 5 shall behold his eyes ; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I  
 6 visit him, saith the LORD : though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper ?  
 6, 7 And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanamel the  
 8 son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Ana-  
 8 thoth : for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. So Hanamel mine uncle's son came to  
 9 me in the court of the guard according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my  
 9 field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin : for the right of in-  
 10 heritance is thine, and the redemption is thine ; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this  
 10 was the word of the LORD. And I bought the field that was in Anathoth of Hanamel mine  
 10 uncle's son, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed  
 11 the deed, and sealed it, and called witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances.  
 11 So I took the deed of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and  
 12 custom, and that which was open : and I delivered the deed of the purchase unto Baruch the  
 12 son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel mine uncle's son, and in the  
 13 presence of the witnesses that subscribed the deed of the purchase, before all the Jews that  
 13, 14 sat in the court of the guard. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the  
 14 LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Take these deeds, this deed of the purchase, both that  
 14 which is sealed, and this deed which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel ; that they  
 15 may continue many days. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Houses and  
 15 fields and vineyards shall yet again be bought in this land.  
 16 Now after I had delivered the deed of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I  
 17 prayed unto the LORD, saying, Ah, LORD GOD ! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the  
 17 earth by thy great power and by thy stretched out arm ; there is nothing too hard for thee :  
 18 which shewest mercy unto thousands, and recompenseth the iniquity of the fathers into the  
 18 bosom of their children after them : the great, the mighty God, the LORD of hosts is his name :  
 19 great in counsel, and mighty in work : whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of  
 19 men ; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings :  
 20 which didst set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, both in Israel  
 20 and among other men ; and madest thee a name, as at this day ; and didst bring forth thy peo-  
 21 ple Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and  
 22 with a stretched out arm, and with great terror ; and gavest them this land, which thou didst  
 22 swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey ; and they came in,  
 23 and possessed it ; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law ; they have done  
 23 nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do : therefore thou hast caused all this evil to  
 24 come upon them : behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it ; and the city is  
 24 given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the  
 25 famine, and of the pestilence : and what thou hast spoken is come to pass ; and, behold, thou  
 25 seest it. And thou hast said unto me, O LORD GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and call  
 25 witnesses ; whereas the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.  
 26, 27 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God  
 26 of all flesh : is there any thing too hard for me ?  
 28 Therefore thus saith the LORD : Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans,  
 29 and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it : and the Chal-  
 29 deans, that fight against this city, shall come and set this city on fire, and burn it, with the  
 30 houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings  
 30 unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of  
 31 Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD. For this  
 31 city hath been to me a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built

32 it even unto this day ; that I should remove it from before my face : because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of  
 33 Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face : and though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not  
 34 hearkened to receive instruction. But they set their abominations in the house which is  
 35 called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Molech ; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination ; to cause Judah to sin.

36 And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and  
 37 by the pestilence : Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath ; and I will bring them again unto  
 38 this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely : and they shall be my people, and I will be  
 39 their God : and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever ; for  
 40 the good of them, and of their children after them : and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good ; and I will put my fear in  
 41 their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole  
 42 soul. For thus saith the LORD : Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people,  
 43 so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate, without man or beast ; it is given into the hand of  
 44 the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe the deeds, and seal them, and call witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the hill country, and in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the South : for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

**32:6-8.** The previous verses give us the circumstances of Jeremiah at the time of this transaction. It seems to have had no reference to the king, but was designed to encourage the pious portion of the people with the assurance that this pending captivity, though terrible, would yet have an end, and the land be yet re-peopled. First, the Lord apprised Jeremiah that Hanameel would soon come and say, "Buy my field in Anathoth." Hence, when he came, Jeremiah knew this was from the Lord. The right of purchase was in the nearest male relative. For the purpose of giving permanence to the location of the several tribes, as well as to restrain the people from removing their residences, the right to alienate their land was carefully restricted by law.

**14, 15.** An earthen vessel would preserve these documents even if they should be buried in the earth for safe keeping. It was supposed by Jerome that this was the prophet's intention. Verse 15 brings out on Divine authority the significance of this whole transaction. It was God's testimony that houses, fields and vineyards should be again possessed in that land. This land, though now doomed to ruin, would arise from its desolation and shine again in the beauty of Eden. Jeremiah's purchase evinced his enduring faith in God. Though he knew the city must be destroyed and the people driven into exile, yet he believed in God that they would yet return and rebuild this city. Moreover, since God Himself directed Jeremiah to do this thing, it became God's own promise

and prophecy of restoration to their country. H. C.

**14.** It would seem, from verses 10, 11, that clay came to be used in Judah as a writing material, just as it was at Babylon or Nineveh, the inner clay record of a contract being covered with an outer coating, on which was inscribed an abstract of its contents, together with the names of the witnesses. Jeremiah's deed of purchase, moreover, was preserved in a jar, like the numerous clay deeds of the Egibi banking-firm, which existed at Babylon from the age of Nebuchadnezzar to that of Xerxes. These jars served the purpose of our modern safes. *Sayce.*

In his desperate extremity, Hanameel urged his cousin Jeremiah to take off his hands a property that was exposed to such terrible risk. That ancestral farm had been in his family from the conquest of the Holy Land by Joshua. It had been apportioned to his line by God's own appointment, and registered in the great Doomsday Book of the Sacred Scriptures. It was the most precious of all the possessions of an Israelite, and was the last thing he would part with, losing his life itself rather than losing it ; for it was this farm that was his charter to an inheritance in the Land of Promise, and his right to be numbered among God's covenant people. Notwithstanding these solemn sanctions, however, Hanameel wished to part with this significant property in a panic of hopelessness. In such a time of disaster, the property would be greatly depreciated in value.



Jeremiah would not take the property at a depreciated value. He would give the full price for it. What a wonderful confidence he had in God's faithfulness to His promises! It seemed at the time as if the end of the covenant people had come; as if Jerusalem and the Land of Promise, with all their sacred institutions, were to pass away from them forever, and to become the possession of their enemies. Every prospect was gloomy in the extreme. There seemed no hope of deliverance. And yet Jeremiah, with prophetic foresight, looked beyond the impending calamity to happier times. And with all the forms and technicalities of legal conveyancing, as if the times were perfectly prosperous and assured, he purchased the field of his fathers from his timorous and faithless kinsman. And then in a splendid oration—half prayer and half exhortation—he proceeded to show that this private domestic transaction was an acted parable of wonderful and far-reaching significance; for the purchase of his own ancestral field was an earnest of a coming time when every field in the land should be possessed in the same way, and the people should again sit each man under his own vine and fig-tree.

And is there not in our own religious experience in these days something that answers to the action of Jeremiah? We live in times of widespread unbelief. The enemies of the faith once delivered to the saints are assailing it with plausible arguments, drawn from the remarkable discoveries and theories of science. The treasure which our fathers have handed down to us has been thrown into the crucible of hostile criticism, and in the residuum we can find little of the precious ore. We are urged to part with much which past ages believed, and to which they attached the highest value; to give up a creed that is old and worn out and effete, and unsuitable to the times, that has no solid ground to rest upon, and that can yield us nothing but disappointment and despair. Shall we then in these troublous times, when so many are capitulating and giving way to the foe, part with our spiritual patrimony—with that which constitutes our dearest and most precious possession? No! We shall not act the faithless, cowardly part of Hanameel. We shall, like faithful Jeremiah, buy the truth and sell it not; for nothing that we could get in exchange would satisfy us. We shall hold fast the profession of our faith to the end; for no other faith—no scientific or philosophic creed—could make up to us for its loss. We shall keep, God helping us, that which our Saviour

has bought for us with His own precious blood. We have succeeded to a great tradition of Divine truth, to which all the intervening ages have borne witness, whose grand principle is stability, and upon whose substance, however its forms and organizations may vary in adaptation to the requirements of each age, is stamped the seal of finality. Into that impregnable citadel we shall retire, and find there strength for faith and power to stand in the evil day. We know that the foundation standeth sure, and that the structure built upon it will abide the severest test, and will emerge only purer and more stable through the very ordeal of fire itself. We know that the present storm of doubt and unbelief will pass away, and there will be again faith upon the earth, and the spiritual atmosphere will be cleared of all its clouds, and the eternal verities of our faith will be made visible like a chain of Alpine peaks, stainless and serene in their untrodden snow, shining out against the infinite purity of the blue heavens, when the dark vapors that obscured them for a while have passed away.

*H. Macmillan.*

*Prayer of Jeremiah, Verses 16-25.*

**16.** *I prayed unto the Lord.* And what a prayer! for weight of matter, sublimity of expression, profound veneration, just conception, Divine unction, powerful pleading, and strength of faith. Historical without flatness, condensed without obscurity, confessing the greatest of crimes against the most righteous of Beings, without despairing of His mercy or presuming on His goodness; a confession that in fact acknowledges that God's *justice should* smite and destroy had not His infinite goodness said, I will pardon and spare. A. C.

**17-25.** In this prayer Jeremiah adores God and His infinite perfections, and gives Him the glory due to His name as the Creator, Upholder, and Benefactor of the whole creation, thereby owning His irresistible power, that He *can* do what He will, and His incontestable sovereignty, that He *may* do what He will (verses 17-19). When at any time we are perplexed about the particular methods and dispensations of Providence, it is good for us to satisfy ourselves with the doctrines of God's wisdom, power and goodness. God is the fountain of all being, power, life, motion and perfection; He *made the heaven and the earth with His outstretched arm*; and therefore who can control Him? Who dares contend with Him? With Him nothing is impossible, no difficulty insuperable. *Nothing is too hard for Thee; with God are*

strength and wisdom sufficient to master all opposition. He is a God of boundless, bottomless mercy; that is His darling attribute; it is His goodness that is His glory; "Thou not only art kind, but Thou *showest lovingkindness*, not to a few, to here and there one, but to *thousands*, thousands of persons, thousands of generations." He is a God of impartial and inflexible justice. His reprieves are not pardons. He is a God of universal dominion and command; He is *the great God*, for He is the *mighty God*; and might among men makes them great. He is *the Lord of hosts*, of all hosts, that is His name, and He answers to His name, for all the hosts of heaven and earth, of men and angels, are at His beck. He contrives everything for the best, and effects everything as He contrived it; He is *great in counsel*, so vast are the reaches and so deep are the designs of His wisdom; and He is *mighty in doing*, according to the counsel of His will. Now such a God as this is not to be quarrelled with. His service is to be constantly adhered to, and all His disposals cheerfully acquiesced in.

He acknowledges the universal cognizance God takes of all the actions of the children of men, and the unerring judgment He passes upon them (verse 19)—*Thine eyes are open upon all the sons of men*, wherever they are, beholding the evil and the good, and upon all *their ways*, both the course they take and every step they take, not as an unconcerned spectator, but as an observing Judge, *to give every one according to his ways and according to his deserts*, which are *the fruit of his doings*, for men shall find God as they are found of Him.

He bewails the rebellions they had been guilty of against God, and the judgments God had brought upon them for these rebellions. God had done everything that He promised them to do, but they had *done nothing of all that He commanded them to do* (verse 23); they made no conscience of any of *His laws*, they *walked not* in them, paid no respect to any of His calls by His prophets for they *obeyed not His voice*. And therefore he owns that God was righteous in *causing all this evil to come upon them*. The city is besieged, is attacked by the sword without, is weakened and wasted by the *famine and pestilence* within (verse 24); it is *given into their hands* (verse 25). He compares the present state of Jerusalem with the Divine predictions, and finds that what God *has spoken is come to pass*. God had given them fair warning of it before; if they had regarded this the ruin had been prevented. He neither complains of God for what He had done, nor

prescribes to God what He should do, but desires He would behold their case, and is pleased to think that He does behold it. H.

**17. Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power.** God has computed the mutual perturbations of millions of suns, and planets, and comets and worlds, without number, through the ages that are passed, and throughout the ages which are yet to come, with perfect and absolute precision. The universe is in motion—system rising above system, cluster above cluster, nebula above nebula—all majestically sweeping around under the providence of God, who alone knows the end from the beginning, and before whose glory and power all intelligent things, whether in heaven or on earth, should bow with humility and awe. *O. M. Mitchell.*

Think of the great natural forces revealed in our outlook on the structure and processes of the astronomical earth and heavens. The thunders and lightnings in their might, the winds and waves at their best, the uplift that sets mountains and continents on their high places, the fires that lap up forests and cities in an hour and turn the toughest metals into fluids and vapors, the forces implied in the annual output of vegetable life as well as in tornadoes, volcanoes and earthquakes—these are very impressive, but not *so* impressive as the forces implied in the rush of comets and planets, in the fierce disturbances seen in the photosphere of the sun, in the sweep of a system of millions of huge worlds at the rate of a million miles an hour, above all in the *sum* of the dynamics included in the universe system sweeping at about the same inconceivable rate around this centre of gravity. What a POWER must He be who could originate, harness and keep well in hand such terrible forces! "The thunder of His power who can understand!"—how natural such a thought to a reasonable astronomer as he looks forth from his Uraniberg on the prodigious stellar movements! *Burr.*

In the Infinite Mind there can be no distinction of past, present and future. He is from eternity to eternity, and in every stage of development He is no less present than were each stage a fresh creation. Nay, it is a fresh creation; for the Omnipotent Will must be incessant, eternal, else not omnipotent. He is no less the Immanent Cause than the First Cause. The universe subsists, the vast design unrolls, by His unceasing fiat. Let that fiat be for one instant withholden, the universe vanishes like the shadow of a dream. Law is but a provisional fiction of philosophy—the non-religious

name for the modes of administration of an orderly universe. Law has a real meaning only for conscious law-keepers—for men and angels, not for suns and stars and oceans—for intelligent causes, not for unintelligent effects. There is no power of obedience in the inanimate objects to which we apply that term. Cut them adrift from the infinite, unceasing Will-Power which holds them in their courses—there would remain for them no law but inertia, which would either arrest them in eternal stillness, or hurl them into internecine chaos. *A. P. Peabody.*

The Most Ancient still works before our eyes. Events succeed to-day in the same orders as in the past. We anticipate the events of to-morrow; we project thought into the coming ages; we see in imagination the great events which will transpire after our bodies sleep in the dust. We read beforehand the scroll of history destined to be unrolled when our race has passed away—when our earth is worn out—when our sun is exhausted—when the stars have decayed and new stars have been set in a new firmament. And yet the power of God works on—the power of the same God who was, and is to be, and always is. And it is this Eternal God, this tireless worker, this all-comprehending intelligence, who works to-day under our observation—in the springing grass, in the flowing tide, in the smoking mountain, in the silently rolling planet, in the flames of the burning suns—works in our homes, works in our hearts, stills our fears, sustains our hopes. Great God, and good! Is this, then, Thy creation—Thy immensity, Thy verdant fields, and do we ask why we should contemplate Thy works? Art Thou in reality here, and are these the proofs of Thy presence and the displays of Thy intelligence, and do we ask if we shall be profited by looking on Thy operations and learning what are Thy ways, what Thy disposition toward the works of Thy hands and the creatures of Thy love? *A. Winchell.*

**26-29.** The Lord answers. He has power adequate to any result that His wisdom deems it best to secure. The city will indeed, as is already indicated, be given up to the Chaldeans, and they will burn and utterly destroy it. Note here how the judgment points its index finger toward the sin which has brought it down. The Chaldean fires will burn those houses *because* on their roofs the infatuated people had offered incense to Baal.

**30-35.** These verses recite again those provocations of Israel which had aroused the indignation of the Lord. These points have often

appeared in the course of Jeremiah's prophecies. Indeed they constitute their burden.

**36-41.** The strain of these promises is exceedingly rich. While they refer primarily to the restoration under Zerubbabel, yet their outlook is far beyond that event. Their spiritual fullness bears us onward into those latter days described so fully in the previous chapter. These great promises are remarkably coincident with those in chap. 31 : 33, 34 : "They shall be *My* people, and I their God;" "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever," with steadfast, unwavering consecration; "Will make an everlasting covenant with them," in contrast with that first covenant which they broke, and it was, therefore, transient; and "I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from Me." Fear of God in the Old Testament sense is true piety—not differing, therefore, from "writing God's law in the heart" (31 : 33). H. C.—God will renew His covenant with them, a covenant of grace, the blessings of which are spiritual, and such as will work good things in them to qualify them for the great things God intended to do for them. God will own them for His, and make over Himself to them to be theirs (verse 38)—*They shall be My people*. He will make them His by working in them all the characters and dispositions of His people, and then He will protect and guide and govern them as His people. And to make them truly, completely and eternally happy, *I will be their God*. They shall serve and worship God as theirs and cleave to Him only, and He will approve Himself theirs. All He is, all He has, shall be engaged and employed for their good. God will give them *one heart and one way*. In order to their walking in *one way*, He will give them *one heart*; as the heart is so will the way be, and both shall be one. The heart is *then* one when it is fully determined for God and entirely devoted to God; when the eye is single and God's glory alone aimed at; when our hearts are fixed, trusting in God, and we are uniform and universal in our obedience to Him; then the heart is one and the way one. H.

**42-44.** These verses serve to connect Jeremiah's recent purchase in Anathoth with this strain of glorious promise. That fact became the occasion of these promises. It was done to be a historic memorial of God's faithfulness to the believing Jews of those times. They might bear the memory of it with them into their captivity, and be assured that the land from which they were then driven is still the Lord's land,

where promise and prophecy are still to have a fulfilment, glorious to the love and faithfulness of their God. H. C.

The story of Jeremiah will not be lost upon us if it teaches us the duty of submission to the will of God. It was not the yoke of Babylon that was at fault in the days of Jeremiah, so much as the yoke of unforsaken sin; it was not by turning to Egypt for help that Judah could

be saved, but by turning to the God whom they had forsaken; let them bow the neck to His law and accept His rule, and all would be well. But the old struggle continually repeats itself. Whose will is to be supreme—the will of God or the will of man? All spiritual conflict is practically the battle of the wills; and only in a full and unreserved acceptance of the Divine will can we find happiness and peace. *E. Bayley.*

## Section 48.

JERUSALEM DESTROYED AND JUDAH TAKEN TO CAPTIVITY IN BABYLON.  
TEMPLE FURNITURE AND PARTS OF THE STRUCTURE CARRIED AWAY.  
BRIEF REFLECTIONS OF THE CHRONICLER. JEREMIAH PROTECTED AND  
EBED-MELECH DELIVERED.

2 KINGS 25 : 8-21 ; 2 CHRONICLES 36 : 14-19 ; JEREMIAH 39 : 8-18 ; 52 : 12-30.

2 KINGS 25 : 8-21.

8 Now in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: and he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house, burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. And the residue of the people that were left in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the residue of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away captive. But the captain of the guard left of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen. And the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases and the brasen sea that were in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldeans break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon. And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. And the firepans, and the basons; that which was of gold, in gold, and that which was of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away. The two pillars, the one sea, and the bases, which

JEREMIAH 52 : 12-30.

12 Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, which stood before the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem: and he burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house, burned he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about. Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the poorest sort of the people, and the residue of the people that were left in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the residue of the multitude. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen. And the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases and the brasen sea that were in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldeans break in pieces, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon. The pots also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. And the cups, and the firepans, and the basons, and the pots, and the candlesticks, and the spoons,

Solomon had made for the house of the LORD ; the brass of all these vessels was  
 17 without weight. The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and a chapter of brass was upon it : and the height of the chapter was three cubits ; with network and pomegranates upon the chapter round about, all of brass : and like unto these had  
 18 the second pillar with network. And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and  
 19 the three keepers of the door : and out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war ; and five men of them that saw the king's face, which were found in the city ; and the scribe, the captain of the host, which mustered the people of the land ; and threescore men of the people of  
 20 the land, that were found in the city. And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Bab-  
 21 ylon to Riblah. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away captive out of his land.

JEREMIAH 39 : 8-18.

8 And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.  
 9 Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the residue of the people that remained in the city, the deserters also, that fell away to him, and the residue of the people that remained.  
 10 But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.  
 11 Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan  
 12 the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm ; but do unto him even as he shall say unto  
 13 thee. So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushazban, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the  
 14 chief officers of the king of Babylon ; they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the guard, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Abikam, the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home : so he dwelt among the people.  
 15 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court  
 16 of the guard, saying, Go, and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus

and the bowls ; that which was of gold, in gold, and that which was of silver, in silver,  
 20 the captain of the guard took away. The two pillars, the one sea, and the twelve brassen bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made for the house of the LORD : the brass of all these vessels was  
 21 without weight. And as for the pillars, the height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits ; and a line of twelve cubits did compass it ; and the thickness thereof was four fingers :  
 22 it was hollow. And a chapter of brass was upon it ; and the height of the one chapter was five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the chapter round about, all of brass : and the second pillar also had like  
 23 unto these, and pomegranates. And there were ninety and six pomegranates on the sides ; all the pomegranates were an hundred upon the network round about. And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door :  
 25 and out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war ; and seven men of them that saw the king's face, which were found in the city ; and the scribe of the captain of the host, who mustered the people of the land ; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in  
 26 the midst of the city. And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to  
 27 Riblah. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried  
 28 away captive out of his land. This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive : in the seventh year three thousand  
 29 Jews and three and twenty : in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred  
 30 thirty and two persons : in the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons : all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.

2 CHRONICLES 36 : 14-19.

14 Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the heathen ; and they polluted the house of the LORD which he  
 15 had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the LORD, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending :

saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good ; and they shall be accomplished before thee in that 17 day. But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD : and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art 18 afraid. For I will surely save thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee : because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

treasures of the house of the LORD, and the 19 these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

NEBUZARADAN, the great marshal of the king of Babylon, comes up against that deplored city and breaks down the walls of it round about ; burns the Temple of the Lord and the king's house and every fair palace of Jerusalem with fire ; drives away the remainder of her inhabitants into captivity ; carries away the last spoils of the glorious Temple. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the wonder of all times, the paragon of nations, the glory of the earth, the favorite of heaven, how art thou now become heaps of ashes, hills of rubbish, a spectacle of desolation, a monument of ruin ! If later, yet no less deep, hast thou now pledged that bitter cup of God's vengeance to thy sister Samaria. How carefully had thy God forewarned thee ! " Though Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah sin." Lo now, as their iniquities so Thy judgments have overtaken her. Both lie together in the dust ; both are made a curse to all posterities. O God, what place shall Thy justice spare if Jerusalem have perished ! If that delight of Thine were cut off for her wickedness, " Let us not be high-minded, but fear." . . . Four hundred and thirty-six years had that Temple stood and beautified the earth, and honored heaven ; now it is turned into rude heaps. There is no prescription to be pleaded for the favor of the Almighty. Only that Temple not made with hands is eternal in the heavens. Thither will He graciously bring His faithful servants, for the sake of that glorious High Priest who has once for all entered into that holy of holies. *Bp. H.*

Judea's weakness lay in this—that she had offended God. From the time of Moses to that of Zedekiah, it was not her own inherent strength or energy that had protected and sustained her, but the supporting hand of the Al-

because he had compassion on his people, 16 and on his dwelling-place : but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, 17 till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or ancient : he gave them 18 all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the

treasures of the king, and of his princes ; all

mighty. God had ever " gone forth with her armies," had given her " help from trouble." Through God she had " done valiantly." He it was who had " trodden down her enemies." Many of their deliverances had been through actual miracle ; others were the result of a divinely infused courage pervading their own ranks, or a panic falling upon their adversaries. It was only as God's " peculiar people," enjoying His covenanted protection, that they could possibly hold their place among the nations of the earth, so soon as great empires were formed and mighty monarchs devised schemes of extensive conquests. God's arm had saved them from Egypt and from Assyria ; He could as easily have saved them from Babylon. He could have bridled Nebuchadnezzar as easily as Zerah or Sennacherib, and have saved the Jews under Zedekiah as readily as under Asa or Hezekiah. But Judah's sins came between him and them. The persistent transgressions of the people from the time of Manasseh, their idolatries, immoralities, cruelties and wickedness of all kinds, shortened God's arm that He could not interpose to save them. As the author of Chronicles puts it, " there was no remedy." " They had transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen ; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem ; they had mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets ;" and so " filled up the measure of their iniquities." Under such circumstances, God could not spare even His own children (Isa. 1 : 4 ; 63 : 16)—His own people. Can, then, any sinful nation hope to escape ? Ought not each to feel the fate of Judah a warning to itself ? *Hammond.*

**2 K. 25 : 8. The nineteenth year of**

**King Nebuchadnezzar.** The first year of Nebuchadnezzar corresponded with the fourth of Jehoiakim (Jer. 25 : 1), when the first deportation occurred, and from which the seventy years of the Captivity are to be reckoned (verses 11, 12). The first year of Zedekiah would accordingly be the ninth of Nebuchadnezzar, and the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in which the capture of Jerusalem occurred, would be Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year.

**10.** The walls, which seemed impregnable and had so long resisted attack, were broken down, and the city was reduced to a mass of ruins (Neh. 2 : 3, 13, 17). It is difficult for us to imagine the feelings produced in the mind of a devout Jew by this fearful desolation. It was not merely the ruin of his country, the overthrow of a kingdom that dated back to the days of David, the destruction of the capital city, with its elegant and venerable palaces, and its world-renowned Temple, the exile of his people from their homes at the will of a relentless conqueror, whose track was marked with fire and blood ; but it looked like the overthrow of the kingdom of God upon earth, and the abandonment of His scheme of grace. The royal house of David, from whom Messiah was to proceed, had fallen. The seed of Abraham, which was to bless the world, was trampled in the dust by haughty foes. The Temple, where God had recorded His name, and where alone acceptable sacrifices could be offered and the Aaronic priesthood perform their mediation, was burned to the ground, and the divinely ordained ceremonial, so significant of blessing, was violently terminated (Lam. 2 : 6-9). It required a strong faith to believe that Jehovah, whose people were thus humiliated, was nevertheless the almighty and sovereign God, whose promises were true and faithful, and that the gods of the victorious Babylonians were impotent and senseless idols.

**11. The residue of the people.** Those who survived the calamities of the siege. The policy of the Assyrian and Babylonish emperors, as shown not merely in the case of the Ten Tribes and subsequently of Judah, but in various other instances recorded upon the monuments, was to transport subjugated populations to distant regions, and supply their place by new colonists brought from elsewhere. W. H. G.—It deserves especial notice that the land which we may henceforth call Judea, to distinguish it from the other parts of Palestine, was not subjected, like that of Samaria had been, to a new colonization by heathen settlers. It lay ready to be occupied by those to

whom God had given it, after it had rested for the sabbatic years of which it had been deprived, and when they themselves had been chastened by affliction. This hope sustained those of the captives who, like Daniel, had still the faith to pray with their faces turned toward Jerusalem ; it is mingled with the sad complaints of the pathetic Psalms that belong to the time of the Captivity, and it even breathes through the more dismal wailing of Jeremiah's Lamentations. P. S.

**12.** In disposing of the still surviving population, the Chaldean policy seems to have been to take away all the princes and nobles, and all men of any considerable wealth or social position ; all who had gone over to them during the war and the siege ; and a portion of the poor. But a few of the poor, said by Jeremiah (39 : 10) to be those who " had nothing," they " left for vine-dressers and husbandmen." It seems probable that they were left, not so much for the sake of keeping up the cultivation of the vineyards and of the soil, as because it would not pay to take them to Babylon as captives, and they could get a subsistence in Judea. H. C.

**18-21.** Signal punishment was dealt out to those who were regarded as ringleaders or as representative persons during the late rebellion. " Seraiah, the chief priest" (high priest), " Zephaniah, the second priest" (probably the substitute of the high-priest), " and the three keepers of the door"—that is, the chiefs of the Levites who kept watch at the three Temple gates (Jer. 38 : 14), were brought before the court which sat at Riblah, and executed. The same punishment as that of the Temple officials was meted out to the royal officers in the city—the chamberlain who had charge of the troops, five of the king's councillors, and the secretary of the general of the army. With these were executed sixty of the people of the land, either as prominent in the late rebellion, or as representing the people generally. A. E.—It devolved on Nebuzaradan to select for exemplary punishment the persons whom he regarded as most guilty, either in respect of the original rebellion or of the protracted resistance. His choice, both as regards the number and the quality of the persons, is such as an equitable and God-fearing man would have made under the circumstances. Instead of taking indiscriminately the first comers, he first selected those who by their offices would be likely to have had most authority—the high-priest ; his *locum tenens*, the second priest ; three of the Temple Levites ; the commandant of the city ;

five members of the king's council (or seven, according to Jer. 52 : 25) ; and the secretary (or adjutant) of the captain of the host. To these he added sixty others, who, though they had not held any special office, were of sufficient dignity to be accounted *sarim*, "princes." If we compare this with the many occasions on which Assyrian and Persian conquerors put to death hundreds or thousands after taking a revolted town, we shall see reason to regard Nebuzaradan (and his master, Nebuchadnezzar) as moderate, or even merciful, in their vengeance. B. C.

13. Nebuchadnezzar carried away the riches and furniture of the Temple at three different times : first, in the third year of Jehoiakim (Dan. 1 : 2) ; these were the vessels which his son Belshazzar profaned (Dan. 5 : 2), and which Cyrus restored to the Jews (Ezra 1 : 7), to be set up in the Temple when rebuilt ; secondly, in the reign of Jehoiachin he again took the city, and cut in pieces a great part of the vessels of gold which Solomon had made (2 K. 24 : 13) ; thirdly, in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, as here related, he pillaged the Temple once more. It is somewhat strange that among the other furniture we find no mention made of the ark of the covenant, which of all other things was held most sacred ; but it was probably burned together with the Temple in this last desolation. *Stackhouse*.—All the more precious treasures had been already removed from the Temple. But there still remained the two pillars of brass named Jachin and Boaz, which Hiram had made for Solomon, and set up in front of the Temple (1 K. 7 : 15-22) ; the brazen sea, a work of the same craftsman, which Ahaz had taken off its oxen and placed upon a pavement of stones (2 K. 16 : 17) ; the brazen bases, or stands for the ten lavers, from which Ahaz had detached the ornamental panels or "borders" (*ibid.*), but which had probably been restored to their original condition by Hezekiah ; a number of small utensils of brass, or rather bronze, belonging to the original service of Solomon (1 K. 7 : 45) ; and a certain number of gold and silver vessels which had either escaped the former plunderings, or had been made by Zedekiah to replace the vessels carried off previously. The list of articles is given in Jer. 52 : 17-23 much more fully than in this place. **Carried the brass to Babylon.** Objects in brass, or rather bronze (for it may be doubted whether brass was as yet known to the Orientals), were frequently carried off by the Assyrians from the conquered nations. Bronze was highly valued, being the

chief material both for arms and implements. B. C.

The first deportation to Babylon is not recorded at all in the historical books, but is mentioned in the opening verses of the prophet Daniel (Dan. 1 : 3, 4). No numbers are given there, but it is said that certain peculiarly gifted young men were selected "of the king's seed and of the princes," among whom were Daniel and his three companions. It appears, then, that there must have been others "of the king's seed and of the princes," probably many of them, and also others who were not thus distinguished. No definite cipher can be fixed, but it seems probable that the number must have been reckoned by hundreds. This occurred in the third year of Jehoiakim, which was the year before Nebuchadnezzar's accession to the throne (see Jer. 25 : 1), although he is very naturally spoken of as "king." Eight years after this—*i. e.*, in Nebuchadnezzar's seventh year—Jeremiah mentions (52 : 28) that 3023 of the Jews were carried off by him to Babylon. This must have occurred in the early part of the same campaign in which he laid siege to and took Jerusalem. In the following year—the eighth of Nebuchadnezzar—Jerusalem was taken, and the king, Jehoiachin, with 10,000 of the people (2 K. 24 : 14), was carried captive. It was at this deportation that the prophet Ezekiel (compare 1 : 1 with 33 : 2) was carried off. There is no record of any further captivity for a period of ten years. At the end of that time, in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah (52 : 29) mentions that 832 were carried away. This also was doubtless in the early part of a campaign which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. At the close of this campaign it is said (2 K. 25 : 11) that "in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar," the "rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, and the remnant of the multitude" were carried away. The numbers are not given, but were probably very large, as they seem to have included the whole mass of the people. Subsequently, in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 52 : 30), 745 more were taken to Babylon. The whole period of the carrying off of the Jews is thus seen to have covered twenty-four years, extending from the year before Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne to the twenty-third year of his reign. The sum of the various numbers mentioned is 14,600 ; but none are given in connection with two of the deportations, that at the time Daniel was taken, which probably amounted to only



a few hundreds, and that after the destruction of the Temple, when probably a much larger body was carried off than in all the others put together. There were then six successive deportations, instead of only the three commonly spoken of; while three of these were each of a less number than 1000 (two of them certainly, the other probably), the other three were large, one just over 3000, the next 10,000, and the third probably many tens of thousands. The mention, often incidentally, of these various deportations may show that there were still others of which no record has been preserved, so that the process was going on at every convenient opportunity for a quarter of a century. The number of Jews remaining in the land at the time of the murder of Gedaliah must therefore have been small, and when these fled to Egypt, the country appears to have become almost entirely depopulated. *F. Gardiner.*

**Jer. 39: 11-14.** Our involuntary respect for the grand king of Babylon is confirmed by the treatment which Jeremiah met with in obedience to his orders. As soon as the city was taken, Nebuzaradan, with the other chief officers, sent for the prophet out of the prison, and committed him to the care of Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, who plays a most important part in the subsequent transactions. P. S.—The man to whom they intrusted him was manifestly one of his early and long-trying friends—a grandson of that Shaphan the scribe who was actively prominent in the reformation under Josiah. (See 2 K. 22: 8-14.) H. C.

The darkness of the picture is at once relieved and deepened by one touch of light. The aged hero of the story at last meets with kindness for his faithfulness. His importance is recognized, for the king of Babylon singles him out in a special charge. His fidelity is rewarded so far as an appreciative Gentile can reward it. He is to be carefully considered and cherished; no harm must befall him; and he is also given his choice, either to go on to Babylon or to remain in his devastated but still beloved country. The old patriot, as we should expect, preferred to stay. With him, also, the very poor of the people are spared. *McPherson.*

**15-18.** Very appropriately the Lord remembers that good and true man, Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, to whom, under God, Jeremiah owed his life (chap. 38: 7-13). His record stands here as that of a godly man who trusted in the Lord. Of course the Lord did not forsake him in his hour of need. He never does. So retribution from the Lord visits the guilty for

their punishment, and the good for their deliverance; "For the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2: 3), and "The Lord is a God of judgment," and "Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Isa. 30: 18). H. C.

2 *Chronicles* 36: 14-16.

The author of the Books of Chronicles, approaching the close of his history, indulges us with some reflections on the causes of the catastrophe which he relates. This is unusual in Scripture history, where commonly the facts are recorded and the reader is left to his own reflections—unless where a prophet, priest, or angel appears to warn or to exhort. The greatness of the event—the awfulness of the consummation—did, however, in this case call for the observations which are introduced. After describing the iniquities of the nation, especially in the latter years, and the obduracy of the king, who "stiffened his neck and hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel," and after distinctly stating that even "all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much," he goes on to say—"And the Lord God of their fathers sent unto them by His messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, TILL THERE WAS NO REMEDY." These are awful words.

The judgment which now befell this people, terrible as it was, is even less striking than the patience which had so long endured their perverseness—which had so long withheld the stroke that at last laid them low. Even as it was, the judgment came most gradually, with constant solicitations to repentance, and with warnings from day to day. The whole Jewish nation, both in Judah and Israel, had all along evinced a strong propensity to idolatrous abominations, which would be almost incredible, in the presence of the light with which they were favored, did we not recollect the prevailing ideas of the times, and the condition of all the neighboring nations; and consider the strong tendency of an exceptional system to be absorbed into those which are more prevalent, especially when the latter is more material, unspiritual and demonstrative than the others. Still we are scarcely able, in our ignorance of idolatrous enticements, to appreciate the temptations to which the Hebrew people were ex-

posed and before which they fell, and which brought them into a state from which the jealous endeavors of good kings—the warnings, invectives, entreaties and threats of a long series of glorious prophets, specially commissioned by God—were ineffectual to rouse them, and to produce a real reformation. It was for this the nation was carried away captive, and the holy city and its Temple reduced to ruin. This calamity came gradually, leaving ample opportunity of repentance, while God had not yet forgotten to be gracious. But they repented not. Gradual punishment produced no reform in the religion or morals of the people, for their morals also had become exceedingly corrupt; and the last king was no better than his predecessors, notwithstanding the more abundant and sharper warnings he received. Therefore the long-suspended doom at length came down, and the land was given over to desolation, and the people to what must have seemed their extinction and utter ruin.

The mercy, the justice and the wisdom of God are all equally displayed in this event. His *mercy* in bringing this judgment so gradually—from lesser to greater, during the space of twenty-two years—so that most ample warning was given, and abundant opportunity was afforded to the nation, that the successive threatenings denounced by the prophets were not vain words, but would most assuredly be accomplished in their season. That it was a most *just* punishment for their sins no one ever questioned, and they have themselves constantly admitted it, even with tears. It was, in particular, a most righteous punishment of their idolatry, whereby they forsook God, and so provoked Him to forsake them, and to suffer their enemies to prevail over them, as Moses had long before foretold in Lev. 26, where the *succession* of the Divine judgments is most remarkably traced out. That is altogether a wonderful chapter, which should be read in connection with the closing portion of the Books of Kings and Chronicles. But also the *wisdom* of God is seen in this. He did not mean utterly to cast off His people, and He therefore brought first expatriation under Jehoiachin—the captive Jews should return to their own land; and before that, Isaiah had predicted that this should take place under an unborn king called Cyrus, of whom high things were spoken. *Kitto*.

**14.** Compare with this passage (verses 14–17) the similar but much longer justification of God's rejection of the Ten Tribes, contained in 2 K. 17 : 7–23. G. R. (Section 29.)

**15. Rising early and speaking.** The oft-recurring expression, "rising up early and speaking," or "sending," is both beautiful and strong. As a man in earnest and full of his mission is up betimes in the morning to begin, so God represents Himself as wakeful and active, giving up the live-long day to His work, laboring with unwearied patience to reclaim and to save His people, but all in vain. H. C. —God in all ages has drawn near His people, and answered with the fidelity of a father to their needs. At every critical moment, and, so to say, at every bifurcation of the road, He has been found, *rising up early* (according to the beautiful expression of Jeremiah), and pouring forth His saving counsels through His prophets. And all these different voices combine in one to proclaim together the master-law, the supreme principle of all history: *He that exalteth himself shall be abased*. It was to this law that all the powers of the ancient world—the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek and the Roman monarchies—had to bow their proud heads. The littleness of Israel was no protection against the application of this great principle. As soon as it took upon itself to make its Divine election the ground of a monopoly, as soon as it dared to make itself an end in itself instead of simply an instrument, as it was in God's purpose, the thunder-bolt which falls from heaven upon everything that exalts itself struck it in its littleness; for let us ever bear in mind that the pride of the little is no more tolerable in the eyes of the Most High than that of the great. This law, indeed, which judged the ancient world, rules the modern world also. It is for this reason that the words of the prophets concern us still. They fell from too great a height to be of merely local or temporary application. Till the end of the world they will recall to men, dazzled with the sense of their own greatness, what they are, and what God is. Individuals and nations are subject to this law. *Godet*.

**16.** Notice the word "till." It shows how slow God is to take away the remedy. His mercy still holds back the arm of justice. But we may sin ourselves into a state, not in which there is no forgiveness, but in which there will be no thought or desire to seek for forgiveness. There is the bourn—worse than any grave—from which no man has returned. "There is no remedy," not on God's account, but on your own; not in God's want of will to save you, but in your own incapacity to will your own salvation. *J. Vaughan*.

Two characteristics of this account of the

fall of Jerusalem are striking—its minute particularity, giving step by step the details of the tragedy, and its entire suppression of emotion. The passionless record tells the tale without a tear or a sob. For these we must go to the Book of Lamentations. This is the history of God's judgment, and here emotion would be misplaced. But there is a world of repressed feeling in the long-drawn narrative, as well as in the fact that three versions of the story are given (Jer. 39 : 52 ; 2 K. 25). Sorrow curbed by submission, and steadily gazing on God's judicial act, is the temper of the narrative. In Lamentations we have the emotions of devout hearts ; here we have the calm record of God's judgment. It is all one long sentence, for in the Hebrew each verse begins with "and," clause heaped on clause, as if each were a footstep of the destroying angel in his slow, irresistible march. Surely the fall of Jerusalem, though all the agony is calmed ages ago, still remains as a solemn beacon, warning that the wages of sin is death, both for nations and individuals ; that the threatenings of God's Word are not idle, but will be accomplished to the utmost tittle ; and that His patience stretches from generation to generation, and His judgments tarry because He is not willing that any should perish, but that for all the long-suffering there comes a time when even a Divine love sees it is needful to say "Now !" and the bolt falls. The solemn word addressed to Israel has application as real to all Christian churches and individual souls : "You only have I known of all the inhabitants of the earth ; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." A. M.

Sin ruined all—the house of David, the Temple of Solomon, the city of so many grand and holy memories. There is no heart, no house, no kingdom, no Church, that sin will not undermine and destroy. In the end of the book God seems to weep over Jerusalem, but He would not force upon it His worship or His law. He spoke to the kings and the people by His prophets. If they would not hearken, nothing could prevent their destruction. In a later age, the Son of God wept over Jerusalem, because its children would not be gathered to Him. The "City of Solemnities" would ruin itself again. The same love of God yearns still over cities, countries, churches, families and individual men, women and children. *D. Frazer.*

The two great moral results sought by means of this destruction of city and Temple, and of this seventy years' captivity, were (1) to cure

the nation of idolatry ; (2) to break down this false reliance on the mere externals of their religious system. The whole Book of Ezekiel should be read with these points in mind. Every chapter, almost every verse, shines in the light of these truths, and bears to their illustration. H. C.—The holy city was ravaged and burned, together with the Temple of God. The place where God had recorded His name was desecrated and utterly demolished, its sacred services were suspended, the priesthood were scattered or slain, and the people of God were exiled from their homes in the heart of a heathen empire. All this, however, instead of annulling God's plan of grace, was a step toward its accomplishment. It was a merited chastisement, designed to arrest the degeneracy and growing corruption of the people. In the providence of God the better portion of the people were carried into exile (Jer. 24 ; Ezek. 11 : 15, 16), and at the end of the exile there was a fresh sifting. The better portion of the exiles, those who truly feared God and trusted His promises, came back to Palestine, while those who had less faith and piety remained behind, in the homes they had in the land of their exile. By this discipline the power of idolatry over the people was completely broken, and they never relapsed into it again. The evil tendencies previously existing were checked. A total change was brought about. From this time forth the Jews were as steadfast in adherence to their ancestral religion as they had previously been prone to depart from it. W. H. G.

This fall of Jerusalem is an object-lesson to teach everlasting truth as to the retributive providence of God. It declares plainly what brings down God's judgments. The terms on which Israel prospered and held their land were obedience to God's law. We cannot directly apply the principles of God's government of them to modern nations. The present analogue of Israel is the Church, not the nation. But when all deductions have been made, it is still true that a nation's religious attitude is a most potent factor in its prosperous development. There are abundant lessons for politics and sociology in the story of Jerusalem's fall. But these lessons have direct application to the individual and to the Christian Church. All departure from God is ruin. We slay ourselves by forsaking Him, and every sinner is a suicide. We live under a moral government, and in a system of things so knit together as that even here every transgression receives its just recompense—if not visibly and palpably in outward

circumstances, yet really and punctually in effects on mind and heart, which are more solemn and awful. "Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." Sin and sorrow are root and fruit. Especially does that crash of Jerusalem's fall thunder the lesson to all churches that their life and prosperity are inseparably connected with faithful obedience and turning away from all worldliness, which is idolatry. They stand in the place that was made empty by Israel's later fall. Our very privileges call us to beware. "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith." That great seven-branched candlestick was removed out of its place, and all that is left of it is its sculptured image among the spoils on the triumphal arch to its captor. Other lesser candlesticks have been removed from their places, and Turkish oppression brings night where Sardis and Laodicea once gave a feeble light. The warning is needed today; for worldliness is rampant in the Church. "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." The fall of Jerusalem is not merely a tragic story from the past. It is a revelation, for the present, of the everlasting truth, that the professing people of God deserve and receive the sorest chastisement, if they turn again to folly.

Further, we learn the method of present retribution. Nebuchadnezzar knew nothing of the purposes which he fulfilled. "He meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so." He was but the "axe" with which God hewed. Therefore, though he was God's tool, he was also responsible, and would be punished even for performing God's "whole work upon Jerusalem," because of "the glory of his high looks." The retribution of disobedience, so far as that retribution is outward, needs no "miracle." The ordinary operations of Providence amply suffice to bring it. If God will to sting, He will "hiss for the fly," and it will come. The ferocity and ambition of a grim and bloody despot, impelled by vainglory and lust of cruel conquest, do God's work, and yet the doing is sin. The world is full of God's instruments, and He sends punishments by the ordinary play of motives and circumstances, which we best understand when we see behind all His mighty hand and sovereign will. The short-sighted view of history says "Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem B. C. so and so," and

then discourses about the tendencies of which Babylonia was exponent and creature. The deeper view says, God smote the disobedient city, as He had said, and Nebuchadnezzar was the rod of His anger.

Again, we learn the Divine reluctance to smite. More than four hundred years had passed since Solomon began idolatry, and steadily, through all that time, a stream of prophecy of varying force and width had flowed, while smaller disasters had confirmed the prophets' voices. "Rising up early and sending" His servants, God had been in earnest in seeking to save Israel from itself. Men said then, "Where is the promise of His coming?" and mocked His warnings and would none of His reproof; but at last the hour struck and the crash came. "As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image." His judgment seems to slumber, but its eyes are open, and it remains inactive, that His longsuffering may have free scope. As long as His gaze can discern the possibility of repentance, He will not strike; and when that is hopeless, He will not delay. The explanation of the marvellous tolerance of evil which sometimes tries faith and always evokes wonder lies in the great words, which might well be written over the chair of every teacher of history: "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward." Alas! that that Divine patience should ever be twisted into the ground of indurated disobedience. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

God's reluctance to punish is no reason for doubting that He will. Judgment is His "strange work," less congenial, if we may so paraphrase that strong word of the prophet's, than pure mercy, but it will be done nevertheless. The tears over Jerusalem that witnessed Christ's sorrow did not blind the eyes like a flame of fire, nor stay the outstretched hand of the judge, when the time of her fall came. The longer the delay, the worse the ruin. The more protracted the respite and the fuller it has been of entreaties to return, the more terrible the punishment. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: toward them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." A. M.

## Section 49.

AFTER HISTORY OF THE REMNANT OF JUDAH : GEDALIAH, GOVERNOR FOR TWO MONTHS, MURDERED ; REJECTING JEREMIAH'S WARNINGS ; THE REMNANT SETTLED IN EGYPT AND PERISHED THERE.

2 KINGS 25 : 22-26 ; JEREMIAH, CHAPS. 40-44

2 Kings 25 : 22-26. A Brief Outline.

- 25** : 22 AND as for the people that were left in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, governor.
- 23** Now when all the captains of the forces, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men. And Gedaliah sware to them and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not because of the servants of the Chaldeans :
- 25** dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and
- 26** the Chaldeans that were with him at Mizpah. And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces, arose, and came to Egypt : for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

*Jeremiah, Chaps. 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44.*

- 40** : 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon. And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God pronounced this evil upon this place : and the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he spake ; because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore
- 4** this thing is come upon you. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which are upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee ; but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear : behold, all the land is before thee ; whither it seemeth good and convenient unto thee to go,
- 5** thither go. Now while he was not yet gone back, Go back then, *said he*, to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people : or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a present, and let him
- 6** go. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.
- 7** Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poorest of the land,
- 8** of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon ; then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son
- 9** of the Maacathite, they and their men. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans : dwell in the
- 10** land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to stand before the Chaldeans, which shall come unto us : but ye, gather ye wine and summer fruits and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. Likewise when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the children of Ammon, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of
- 12** Ahikam, the son of Shaphan ; then all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.
- 13** Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the
- 14** fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, and said unto him, Dost thou know that Baalis the king of the children of Ammon hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take thy life ? But
- 15** Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it : wherefore should he take thy life, that all the Jews

16 which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant of Judah perish? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing : for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

41 : 1 Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and one of the chief officers of the king, and ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah ; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah. Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, even the men of war. And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it, that there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with oblations and frankincense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the LORD. And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went : and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. And it was so, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that were with him. But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not : for we have stores hidden in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren. Now the pit wherein Ishmael cast all the dead bodies of the men whom he had slain, by the side of Gedaliah, (the same was that which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel,) Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with them that were slain. Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam : Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the children of Ammon.

11 But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, 12 heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon. Now it came to pass that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were 14 glad. So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and 15 returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah 16 escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the children of Ammon. Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, even the men of war, and the 17 women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon : and they departed, and dwelt in Geruth Chimham, which is by Beth-lehem, to go to enter into 18 Egypt, because of the Chaldeans : for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor over the land.

49 : 1 Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah 2 the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, and said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we pray thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant ; for we are left but a few of 3 many, as thine eyes do behold us : that the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we 4 should walk, and the thing that we should do. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you ; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words ; and it shall come to pass that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto 5 you ; I will keep nothing back from you. Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness amongst us, if we do not even according to all the word wherewith the 6 LORD thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee ; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

7, 8 And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, 9 and all the people from the least even to the greatest, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him : If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant 10 you, and not pluck you up : for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid ; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD : for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. And I will grant you 12 mercy, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land. But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land ; so that ye obey not the voice of the LORD your 14 God ; saying, No ; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor 15 hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread ; and there will we dwell : now therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah : thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there ; 16 then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye fear, shall overtake you there in the land

of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye are afraid, shall follow hard after you there in Egypt ;  
 17 and there ye shall die. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to  
 sojourn there ; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence : and none  
 18 of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them. For thus saith the  
 LORD of hosts, the God of Israel ; As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon  
 the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter  
 into Egypt : and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach ;  
 19 and ye shall see this place no more. The LORD hath spoken concerning you, O remnant of  
 20 Judah, Go ye not into Egypt : know certainly that I have testified unto you this day. For  
 ye have dealt deceitfully against your own souls ; for ye sent me unto the LORD your God,  
 saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God ; and according unto all that the LORD our God  
 21 shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it : and I have this day declared it to you ; but  
 ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God in any thing for the which he hath sent  
 me unto you. Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine,  
 22 and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go to sojourn there.

**43 : 1** And it came to pass that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the  
 people all the words of the LORD their God, wherewith the LORD their God had sent him to  
 2 them, even all these words, then spake Azariah, the son of Hoshaiiah, and Johanan the son of  
 Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely : the LORD our  
 3 God hath not sent thee to say, Ye shall not go into Egypt to sojourn there : but Baruch the  
 son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that  
 4 they may put us to death, and carry us away captives to Babylon. So Johanan the son of  
 Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD,  
 5 to dwell in the land of Judah. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the  
 forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all the nations whither they  
 6 had been driven to sojourn in the land of Judah ; the men, and the women, and the children,  
 and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had  
 left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and  
 7 Baruch the son of Neriah ; and they came into the land of Egypt ; for they obeyed not the  
 8 voice of the LORD : and they came even to Tahpanhes. Then came the word of the LORD unto  
 9 Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in mortar in  
 the brickwork, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men  
 10 of Judah ; and say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Behold, I  
 will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne  
 11 upon these stones that I have hid ; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And  
 he shall come, and shall smite the land of Egypt ; such as are for death *shall be given* to death,  
 12 and such as are for captivity to captivity, and such as are for the sword to the sword. And  
 I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt ; and he shall burn them, and carry  
 them away captives : and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd put-  
 13 teth on his garment ; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. He shall also break the  
 pillars of Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt ; and the houses of the gods of Egypt  
 shall be burn with fire.

**44 : 1** The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwelt in the land of  
 Egypt, which dwelt at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of  
 2 Pathros, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel : Ye have seen all the evil  
 that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah ; and, behold, this day  
 3 they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein ; because of their wickedness which they  
 have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, *and* to serve other  
 4 gods, whom they knew not, neither they, nor ye, nor your fathers. Howbeit I sent unto you  
 all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this  
 5 abominable thing that I hate. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from  
 6 their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. Wherefore my fury and mine anger  
 was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem ; and  
 7 they are wasted and desolate, as it is this day. Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God  
 of hosts, the God of Israel : Wherefore commit ye *this* great evil against your own souls, to  
 cut off from you man and woman, infant and suckling, out of the midst of Judah, to leave  
 8 you none remaining ; in that ye provoke me unto anger with the works of your hands, burn-  
 ing incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to sojourn ; that ye may  
 be cut off, and that ye may be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth ?  
 9 Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah,  
 and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your  
 10 wives, which they committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem ? They are  
 not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my  
 11 statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers. Therefore thus saith the LORD of  
 hosts, the God of Israel : Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, even to cut off all  
 12 Judah. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land  
 of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed ; in the land of Egypt shall they  
 fall ; they shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine ; they shall die, from the least  
 13 even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine : and they shall be an execration,  
 and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. For I will punish them that dwell in the  
 land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pesti-  
 14 lence : so that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to

sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there : for none shall return save such as shall escape.

15 Then all the men which knew that their wives burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great assembly, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, 16 in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the 17 name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly perform every word that is gone forth out of our mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem : for then had we plenty of victuals, and 18 were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed 19 by the sword and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out 20 drink offerings unto her, without our husbands? Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, even to all the people which had given him that answer, saying, 21 The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD 22 remember them, and came it not into his mind? so that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed ; therefore is your land become a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without inhabitant, as it is this day. Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against 23 the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies ; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as it is this day. 24 Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the 25 LORD, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt : thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying : Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and with your hands have fulfilled it, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her : establish then your 26 vows, and perform your vows. Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt : Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, 27 saying, as the LORD GOD liveth. Behold, I watch over them for evil, and not for good : and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the 28 famine, until there be an end of them. And they that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, few in number ; and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose word shall stand, mine, 29 or theirs. And this shall be the sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this 30 place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil : thus saith the LORD : Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life ; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.

BEFORE pursuing the story of the Jews at Babylon to the end of the Captivity, we may conclude the history of Judea itself during the last twenty-five years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (B.C. 586-561), comprising the fate of the people left behind, and the fortunes of Jeremiah. P. S.—Nothing could more effectually show the hopeless condition of the people, and their unfitness for self-government, than this brief narrative of events which followed the destruction of Jerusalem. The detailed history is given in Jeremiah, chaps. 40-44. J. O.—These five chapters contain a particular account of what passed in the land of Judah from the taking of Jerusalem to the retreat of the people into Egypt, and the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning them there. *Blayney.*

#### *Outline of the History.*

A remnant of the people, among whom was Jeremiah, who was by Nebuchadnezzar's express command treated with the greatest respect (Jer. 39 : 11-14 ; 40 : 1-6), was left in the land ;

and fields and vineyards were assigned to them by Nebuzaradan (39 : 10). Nebuchadnezzar placed over them as his viceroy Gedaliah, a son of the prince Ahikam, who appears (2 K. 22 : 12) in high official position under Josiah, and to whom Jeremiah owed his deliverance when accused under Jehoiakim (Jer. 24 : 24, cf. verse 16). Gedaliah, with a small Chaldee garrison, took up his abode at Mizpah, in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. After the departure of the Chaldean army a great number of Jews, who had by reason of the war been scattered in the neighboring countries, returned to Judea. Certain Jewish captains also, and others who had borne arms against the Chaldeans, settled at Mizpah, where they were kindly received by Gedaliah, who promised them pardon and protection if they would submit to the Chaldeans. The viceroyship of Gedaliah, however, which had held out to a considerable portion of the people the prospect of the peaceable possession of their native soil, lasted only two months. One of these captains, Ishmael, the son of



Nethaniah, of the seed royal, instigated by Baalis, king of the Ammonites, placed himself at the head of a conspiracy against Gedaliah, who, not esteeming so base a treachery possible, and therefore rejecting the warning given him of it, was, together with the Chaldeans and Jews dwelling with him at Mizpah, slain during a banquet at which he was entertaining the conspirators. The Jews, who were hardly yet settled, fearing the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar, determined, in spite of the warnings of Jeremiah, to emigrate to Egypt, whither the prophet also followed them. Surrendering themselves in Egypt to the worship of idols, to the neglecting of which they attributed the misfortunes of Judea (see the remarkable passage, Jer. 44 : 17 sqq.), Jeremiah was here also constrained to exercise his office of reprov- er, and probably terminated his storm-tossed life in that country (chaps. 40-44 belong to this period). His predictions (43 : 8-14 ; 44 : 30) were fulfilled, for in the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem (584), Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt, slew its king, and again carried away a host of Jews to Babylon. Whether this is the deportation mentioned (Jer. 51 : 30), or whether the latter refers to a remnant still existing in Judea, cannot be determined. At all events, Judea lay desolate (cf. Zech. 7 : 14 ; 2 Chron. 36 : 21), so far as it was not occupied by the neighboring nations, particularly the Philistines and Edomites. The latter especially, who had long coveted the territory of Israel (Ezek. 35 : 10), must have taken possession of the southern part of the country (see the Greek Ezra, the so-called third book of Esdras, 4 : 50). *Oehler.*

**Jer. 40 : 4-6.** Here the captain of the guard obeys the instructions which he had from his sovereign, as stated chap. 39 : 12, giving the prophet his free choice to go with the captives to Babylon, or to remain with the remnant in their own land. In the former case he had the fullest assurance of kind treatment and even of somewhat distinguished favors. In our imperfect human view, it would have been much for his comfort and welfare to have gone with the captives. His sympathies were strongly with them—not with this company alone, but with those who had gone before, as his letter to them (chap. 29) shows. He knew that they were the better portion of the Jewish people (chap. 24), and that the moral hopes of the nation lay in them ; also that his own personal safety was strongly guaranteed in that country. Yet, notwithstanding all these considerations, he chose to remain with these poor, weak,

and, as it proved, morally unreliable and treacherous people. Probably he had some intimations that this was the Lord's will, so he met this slow martyrdom with his usual moral heroism. The sequel will show that he had bitter trials with this remnant—the refuse of the Jewish population. This Mizpah was near Jerusalem, the same which appears in the history of Samuel.

**9-12.** During the eighteen months' siege of Jerusalem many Jews would naturally flee their country and take refuge in countries adjacent. These now returned and placed themselves under the protection of Gedaliah and the Chaldean sovereign.

**13-16.** Johanan and his fellow-officers became aware of the foul conspiracy projected by the king of the Ammonites, to be executed by Ishmael against the life of Gedaliah. Unfortunately this Gedaliah, a good, well-meaning man, was not shrewd enough for his dangerous position, but had allowed himself to be deceived by this foul assassin. Hence he would not give heed to these forewarnings of danger, nor allow Ishmael to be put to death. H. C.

**41 : 1, 2.** Gedaliah had been warned by Johanan of Ishmael's intentions. Ishmael, it appears, was in league with the Ammonites, and had been incited by the Ammonitish king, Baalis, to assassinate Gedaliah. Johanan offered to crush the treason by himself killing Ishmael ; but Gedaliah, not believing his information, would not consent. The circumstances of the murder were, according to Oriental notions, of the extremest atrocity. Ishmael and his ten friends, with their retainers, professed to come on a visit to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and were there hospitably entertained by him (verse 1). Having "eaten of his salt," they suddenly rose upon him, slew him with his immediate attendants, and then attacking the Chaldean garrison of the place, put every man to the sword (verses 2, 3). B. C.—The murder of Gedaliah gave occasion to the fast of the seventh month, which the Jews observed after their return from captivity. (See Zech. 7 : 5 ; 8 : 19.)

**3. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him.** That is, all those that joined in opposing Ishmael and assisting Gedaliah ; for several of the commanders as well as the greatest part of the people were still left alive, as appears from the sequel of the story (verses 10, 11). *W. Louth.*

**41 : 5-43 : 13.** Two days later a band of eighty mourners appeared on the frontier, from Shechem, and Shiloh, and Samaria, bringing offerings for the desolated house of God, a

touching proof of the religious patriotism which was still to be found even in the most heathenized part of Israel. By a treacherous artifice, Ishmael slew them all but ten, and cast their bodies, with those of his former victims, into a pit which Asa had dug at Mizpah for a hiding-place during his war with Baasha, and which may rank in history with the Glacière of Avignon and the well of Cawnpore. He then collected the people who were at Mizpah, including the daughters of Zedekiah, who had been entrusted to Gedaliah's care, and carried them off as captives toward Ammon. He was pursued by the Jewish captains, headed by Johanan, the son of Kareah, the same who had ineffectually warned Gedaliah. They overtook him by the great waters at Gibeon, and rescued the captives, while Ishmael, with eight comrades, fled to Ammon. Then, instead of returning to Mizpah, they marched southward to Bethlehem, intending to take refuge in Egypt from Nebuchadnezzar's vengeance for the murder of his governor. First, however, they asked Jeremiah for counsel from Jehovah. In ten days the answer came, forbidding them to go to Egypt, promising them the protection of God if they remained, and assuring them that, if they persisted in departing, the famine, and sword, and pestilence, from which they fled, would overtake them in their new refuge. So faithful was the prophet to the long-standing command that the people should never, under any pressure, seek to return by the way of Egypt. His warning only brought upon him a charge of conspiring with Baruch to speak falsely in God's name; and both he and Baruch were carried to Egypt against their will, with all the remnant who had been left under Gedaliah. Many of the Jews had already taken refuge there during the whole time that Egypt was regarded as their help against Assyria. They now formed a large community, living at Migdol, Tahpanhes, Noph, and Pathros—a community which had afterward an important history of its own. Meanwhile they fell into idolatry, and Jeremiah denounced both on them and on Egypt itself the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar—a prophecy echoed from the banks of the Euphrates by Ezekiel, whose warnings, promises and exhortations to the exiles at Babylon still kept pace with the current of events in Judea. P. S.

**42: 3. That the Lord thy God may shew us the way.** It is the constant method of hypocrites to pretend a profound submission to the will of God, till it crosses their inclinations or interest. *W. Louth.*

**4-6.** They reiterate their promise to obey the Lord's word—a promise previously implied but less distinctly expressed. So far all appears fair, and we are left in the hope that this little remnant will indeed learn wisdom from the bitter experiences of the past, and will now follow the Lord honestly and fully.

**9-12.** The answer was definite and plain, promising good if they would remain trustfully in the land of Judah, assuring them they need fear nothing from the Chaldeans, as to whom the Lord would amply protect them. There is a rich and touching significance in the phraseology, "I will show mercies unto you, that He may have mercy upon you." God will manifest His mercy toward them by inspiring compassion for them in the otherwise hard and selfish heart of the king of Babylon.

**13-18.** The other alternative is strongly put before them. If they *will go* down into Egypt despite the Lord's friendly counsel and earnest prohibition, the very evils they were seeking to escape would surely overtake them there for their destruction. They might think to escape war, famine and pestilence there; but assuredly they would not, but, on the contrary, would certainly meet them there in their most fearful forms. H. C.

**19. The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah, go ye not into Egypt.** God commanded the Jews by Moses not to have any commerce with Egypt, that they might not practise the idolatrous customs of that country, with whose idolatries they had been defiled during their sojourning there. Afterward he often reproved them by His prophets for making alliances with Egypt. There were particular reasons at this time for so severe a prohibition, as the words here and in the context import—namely, because the Jews either learned several of their idolatrous practices from the Egyptians, or at least were confirmed in those evil customs by their example. (See chap. 44: 8, 15; Ezek. 29: 16.) Besides, it was the rival kingdom that contended for empire with the Babylonians. So the Jews going into Egypt for protection was in effect refusing to submit themselves to the king of Babylon, to whom God had decreed the government of Judea, and all the neighboring countries. *W. Louth.*

**19-22.** The noticeable thing in these closing verses is, that the Lord distinctly assumes that the people were not honest in submitting this great question to Him for His direction. He knew their hearts before they audibly answered, and therefore anticipated the very

words they were about to say. It was every way befitting that the Lord should set their real heart before their own eyes, and solemnly apprise them of the ruin they were bringing on themselves by their hypocrisy. It was the most hopeful moral means He could use to arrest them in their course of sin, and turn them to repentance. How fruitless and ruinous are such subterfuges and dissimulations toward God! When did mortal man ever attempt them and prosper! When has such a dissembler ever failed of bringing ruin on his own soul! H. C.

**43:2. Azariah.** Called Jezaniah, chap. 42:1. We may observe many like instances in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, of the same person being called by different names. *W. Louth.*

**2, 3.** They deny it to be a message from God. "Johanan, and all the proud men, said to Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely." See here the cause of their disobedience: it was pride; only by that comes contention both with God and man; they were proud men that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their sentiments and the control of their designs—no, not by the Divine wisdom, by the Divine will itself. H.—Their hearts were fully set on going down into Egypt. Hence, they would not believe that the God they still professed to honor, and of whom they still spake as "the Lord *our* God," had forbidden it. This is one of the most common methods of resisting the authority of God and refusing Him obedience. In this case those proud men slanderously charged Baruch with inciting Jeremiah against them for the alleged purpose of delivering them over to the Chaldean power for death or captivity. In all this they fully assumed that nothing but hostility to their best interests could induce men to prefer submission to the Chaldeans rather than to the Egyptians. This political feeling of hostility to the former power and of trust in the latter was intensely strong, and strangely arrayed on the side of the wicked and proud against God and His true servants. H. C.

**4-6.** These proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch his scribe to go along with them to Egypt; they carried them away as prisoners. H.—The warning was in vain. The message of Jeremiah was represented as only the outcome of his own and of Baruch's personal resentment; and the leaders of Judah carried the feeble remnant to Tahpanhes in Egypt—there yet again to hear the voice of the aged prophet announcing the com-

ing judgment on the country where, in their unbelief and hardheartedness, they had sought shelter. So the last remnant of Judah had gone from the land. The Davidic rule had passed away, so far as merely earthly power was concerned. The Davidic kingdom to come would be wider, higher, deeper. It would embrace the brotherhood of man; it would reach up to heaven; it would root in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. But over all the land would be desolateness and stillness. Yet was it a "stillness unto God." The land was keeping long-neglected silent Sabbath unto God; ten times, "to fulfil threescore and ten years." A. E.

**8-13.** We have here, as also in the next chapter, Jeremiah prophesying in Egypt. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and masters were; he was there among idolatrous Egyptians and treacherous Israelites; but there he received the word of the Lord; it came to him. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice but by constraint, God withdrew not His wonted favor from him. What he received of the Lord he delivered to the people. Now we find two messages which Jeremiah was appointed and intrusted to deliver when he was in Egypt: one in this chapter, relating to Egypt itself and foretelling its destruction; the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt. God had told them before that if they went into Egypt the sword they feared should follow them; here he tells them further that the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, should follow them. H.

**8-11.** This laying of great stones by the prophet in the clay of a brick-kiln, near the entrance of the king's house, was to be done "in the sight of the men of Judah." Such a transaction would serve to impress more strongly the words of His prophecy that the king of Babylon would certainly come there and set up his throne upon those very stones. Verse 11 must be understood as involving the destruction of at least the greater part of these Jewish exiles. They were especially among those doomed to death, the sword and captivity. H. C.

**13. Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt.** The same as On or Heliopolis (Gen. 41:45). Heliopolis was the Greek translation of "Beth-shemesh," the house or city of the sun, called by Jeremiah "Beth-shemesh in the land of Egypt," to distinguish it from another Beth-shemesh in the land of

Canaan. This city was probably near the royal city Zoan, and only fifteen stadia, or something less than two miles, from the sea, according to Herodotus. *Hales*.—The Memnonium, a temple in Thebes, measures four hundred feet by one hundred and fifty, its central hall having a solid roof supported by forty-eight massive columns, and "studded with stars on an azure ground." Most of these pillars and part of the roof still remain. The astronomical subjects upon the ceiling of a small inner chamber of the temple have furnished a clew to the determination of some of the great cycles of Egyptian history. The Memnonium was built by the great Rameses, and its walls are illustrated with his victories, chiefly in Asia. Some of these sculptures are quite spirited. In front of the building, and flanked by colossal figures, the monarch placed the most stupendous statue ever reared in the world. This was the personification of Egyptian power in the colossal image of the king, "seated on a throne in the usual attitude of Egyptian figures, the hands resting on his knees, indicative of that tranquillity which he had returned to enjoy in Egypt after the fatigues of victory." The statue was of one solid piece of sienite, and must have been transported from the quarry more than a hundred miles. Its weight has been computed at upward of eight hundred and eighty-seven tons; it is said to have been originally seventy-five feet high by twenty-three in breadth. By my own measurement of its fragments, as it now lies broken on the ground, I found the forehead fourteen feet from ear to ear; the head twenty-five feet six inches across from point to point, where the back lies upon the ground—the whole circumference not being accessible—the body fifty-one feet, measured across the shoulders from their insertion in the back, the shoulder itself sixteen feet six inches, the arm eleven feet six inches from shoulder to elbow, and the foot five feet ten inches long by four feet eight inches broad. This statue was overthrown by Cambyses, the Persian conqueror of Egypt, in the year 525 B.C. Years before this event, a Hebrew prophet had uttered the remarkable words: "He [the king of Babylon] shall break also the images [statues or standing images] of Beth-shemesh [the house of the sun], that is in the land of Egypt." The overthrow of such an image, standing at the main gate of one of the principal temples of Thebes, may well have been symbolical of the destruction of Egypt. Indeed, I know not whether was the greater marvel, to set up this gigantic statue, or to throw

it down so as to break the solid granite into the huge blocks now strewn upon the ground. *J. P. Thompson*.

**Chap. 44.** This chapter completes the history of that remnant of Jews who went to Egypt. The prophet solemnly admonishes them, appealing to the example then fresh in their eye, of the ruin of their brethren in Jerusalem and Judah. They answer that idolatry and sin have paid well and insured them prosperity, and they will persist in their wicked ways. The Lord, by His prophet, pronounces His fearful curse on them, and gives them a sign of its execution—the fall of Pharaoh-hophra, then king of Egypt. H. C.

2. God puts them in mind of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, which, though the captives "by the rivers of Babylon" were daily mindful of them (Ps. 137:1), the fugitives in the cities of Egypt seem to have forgotten, and needed to be put in mind of; though these desolations, one would have thought, had not been so long out of sight as to become out of mind. "Ye have seen" what a deplorable condition Judah and Jerusalem are brought into; now will you consider whence those desolations came? H.

2-4. It would seem that this appeal would be resistless, since that ruin of their fellow-countrymen had been so terrible, and withal was so recent and fresh before their minds. But the infatuation of sin defies all reason, and sets at naught all our calculations as to what men ought rationally to do or to think. This reference made by the Lord to His unwearied and most earnest labors through His prophets to reclaim and save the people has appeared frequently before in the writings of Jeremiah, yet here with the addition of this striking statement of the substance of His appeal: "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate!" In most brief and expressive terms God implores His people not to give their hearts to idol-gods and to rebellion against Himself, speaking of such a course as being "this abominable thing that I hate." What could be more detestable in His sight than such sin! It was cruel wrong against Himself personally; it outraged all truth and reason; it could not fail of being utterly ruinous to themselves, both because of the horrible vices which it introduced and fostered, because of its terribly polluting influence upon their own souls, and because of the judgments for such sin, which, as a God both benevolent and just, He must bring upon them for it, even to their destruction. The passage has a rich significance as applied to all sin in all ages, for

all sin has the nature of idolatry. It is always rebellion against God ; it always gives the heart to some other god than Jehovah ; it is always " that abominable thing which He hates," and He always and everywhere implores men not to do it, because it will surely be their ruin. It will of itself punish them, and over and above its own natural influences and results, God will and must make it work the ruin of all who will not repent and forsake it. H. C.

**4. This abominable thing which I hate.** God Himself, we have always understood, hates sin with a most authentic, celestial and eternal hatred. The path of it is the path of a flaming sword ; he that has eyes may see it, walking inexorable, divinely beautiful and divinely terrible, through the chaotic gulf of human history, and everywhere burning the false and the deadworthy from the true and life-worthy ; making all human history a God's cosmos in place of a devil's chaos. So it is in the end ; even so, to every man who is a man and has eyes to see. *Carlyle*.—If man could understand the unspeakable heinousness of sin, even of one sin, he would sooner plunge into a fiery furnace than commit it. If the sea were made of fire he would sooner seek the companionship of its burning waves and dwell in the midst of them, than endure the pang, the leaden torment which sooner or later must develop itself from every transgression. *Catherine Adorna*.

Into the very texture of the plan of redemption is woven the most emphatic protest against sin in its every form. If its expiation demanded a sacrifice no less costly than the blood of the Son of God, must it not be intrinsically hateful in its own nature, and abominable in the eyes of Him in whose eternal counsels such a sacrifice was decreed ? The Cross, then, furnishes no less striking a testimony of God's hostility against sin than it does of His love for sinners. The terrors of the Law, as well as the mercies and proffers of the Gospel, are traced in the letters of the Saviour's blood ; if that blood at one time speaks to man in the still small voice of peace and reconciliation, it assures him at another time, in tones of thunder, of God's determination to visit all moral evil with eternal banishment from His presence. E. M. G.

All the guilt that lies in foul rebellion against the mildest and most merciful of earthly monarchs ; in disobeying the kindest and grieving the best of fathers ; in ingratitude to a generous benefactor ; in returning cursing for blessing, evil for good, and hatred for favors · in wound-

ing a heart that loves us and the hand that was stretched out to pluck us from destruction ; in refusing to please One who, though rich, for our sakes made Himself poor ; took our debts on Him and paid them ; took our burdens on Him and carried them ; and bearing disgrace to crown us with honor, saved our lives at the expense of His own—all that evil, multiplied a thousand and a thousand times, there is in sin. It is a horrible crime committed against a gracious God and a loving Saviour, to say nothing of the injuries our sins have inflicted on ourselves, and the irreparable wrongs they may have done to others. It is from such views that true repentance springs. *Guthrie*.

**11-14.** The Lord reiterates His threatening of judgments upon these Jews in Egypt, assuring them they could by no means escape the same utter ruin that had befallen their countrymen. Only a very small remnant, the least fraction of them, would escape. (See verse 28.)

**15-18.** These verses are a mournful illustration of the madness of sin and of its social power over depraved hearts. All the men who knew that their wives were implicated in idol-worship were prominent in their defence. The women themselves, moreover, were not backward through modesty or any conscious sense of their degradation and guilt ; but with the boldest effrontery stood up to avow their eternal devotion to their base idol-worship. Note their reasoning : " It was well with us while we were worshipping our idols." So sinners often reason. " Because vengeance against their evil work is not executed speedily," but the Lord waits long for them to repent, they account this quiet exemption from calamity as the natural prosperity of sinning. So much, say they, comes to us by virtue of our living as we list and doing our own pleasure. Thus they reach the conclusion that sin pays well. Satan cheats their souls into this horrible delusion, and they love to have it so. Then the second stage of their experience is perverted to prop up the same delusion : " Since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven we have wanted all things," etc. They left off, not at all in the way of honestly forsaking their sin by turning to God in penitence, but only because the judgments of God began to fall upon them and break up the worship they would fain have continued as before ; and now they strangely impute these calamities to the frown of those senseless gods whose worship they had suspended. So the devil fortifies their wicked purpose with this double delusion. He makes them think that the good they receive in God's

forbearance despite of their sin is the natural fruit of their sin, and that the ills which come of their sins really come of their *not* sinning—*i.e.*, of their being broken off by the judgments of God from the sins they would fain have continued to commit. With such miserable delusions does the great deceiver of human souls mislead them to their damnation ! It is awful to think that the native delicacy of the female sex should ever admit of such devotion to rites so impure and polluting !

**24-28.** Now the Lord sends a special message in addition to what the prophet had said before. He begins with saying, " Yes, you are committed fully to your wickedness and to your idolatry. Let that be understood. You have vowed eternal devotion to those idols, and you intend to perform those vows. Of course it only remains to the mighty God, the great God of your fathers, to visit you with judgments till you are utterly consumed." A very small remnant only will escape, barely enough to be witnesses to the fearful desolation sent on their fellow-sinners, and to know whose words did stand—God's, or their own.

We have now followed the prophetic history of the Jews to the point where the last feeble remnant is mainly exterminated in the land of Egypt. This portrayal of their sin and doom is exceedingly rich in its moral lessons for all subsequent ages. All along through the chapters of this prophet we have seen the developments of intense and strange infatuation, as if the people had become demented and lost to all reason and conscience. This infatuation seems to have culminated in this miserable remnant in Egypt, just where those impressive lessons from God's past judgments ought to have opened their eyes at least to their peril if not to their guilt. We stand amazed at such de-

pravity, and cannot wonder that the Lord should visit upon it the most terrible inflictions of His rod. The whole Book of Jeremiah shows how slowly the wrath of the Lord arose against even this guilty people ; how carefully He exposed to their view their great sin, and held it up in every just and appropriate light as a breach of covenant, an abuse of mercy, an insult to the great God, their Maker and Father, and as done in the face of constant warnings through His prophets, whom for a long time he had been rising early and sending. Interspersed with and following these revelations of their sin were repeated invitations to repentance and assurances of pardon, couched in most tender and touching terms, and sent from the Lord in the gentle tones and oft-flowing tears of this most affectionate prophet. Let us not fail to note that those tones and tears were only a fair representation of the heart of the Lord who selected, inspired and sent him. Verily, all that tender sympathy, faithful reproof, long delay and admonitory forewarnings could do to reclaim and to save guilty men was faithfully and fervently done to save this guilty nation, but in vain. The hour of retribution must therefore come at last. It came, and its vengeance was terrible ! Does not all this history bear a startling testimony to the great facts and principles of God's moral government over nations here in time? And more than this, must we not draw from it a fearful inference as to the future doom of all incorrigible sinners who must stand singly to bear the curse of their own unpardoned sin in the world of final retribution? Out of the depths of this history a voice comes up from its underlying truths, witnessing that the end of great sins, unrepented of, must be a great and terrible damnation. H. C.

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## Section 50.

PERIOD OF THE CAPTIVITY. CONDITION OF EXILED JEWS. EFFECTS OF CAPTIVITY: EXTIRPATION OF IDOLATRY, EXTENSION OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND OF MESSIANIC PROPHECIES, PREPARATION FOR CHRIST AND CHRISTIANITY.

2 CHRONICLES 36 : 20, 21.

20 AND them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon ; and they were served 21 vants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia : to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths : *for* as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

**20.** That "the reign of the kingdom of Persia" immediately succeeded to that of Babylon, which was swallowed up by the great Aryan power within seventy years of the accession of Nebuchadnezzar, is declared with one voice by the classical historians, and has been recently confirmed by more than one native document. Two inscriptions, brought from Babylonia within the last decade, describe the circumstances under which the great empire of Babylon collapsed before the arms of Cyrus the Great, and was absorbed into his dominions. G. R.

**21.** It should be observed that in this very expression of the *land enjoying her sabbaths* the promise of a restoration is conveyed. For the expression implies merely a temporary rest and not a total dereliction. *Berriman*.—**She kept sabbath.** Thus was the land left desolate that it might enjoy its sabbatical years of rest, of which it had been defrauded by the avarice and disobedience of the Jews, fulfilling the early denunciation of Moses (Lev. 26 : 34) and the later of Jeremiah (2 Chron. 36 : 21); and it is truly remarkable that Nebuchadnezzar left it in that state, and did not attempt again to people it, as the policy of the kings of Assyria had led them to do in Samaria. The land, therefore, lay still vacant for their reception against their return, the providence of the God of Judah insensibly overruling the counsels and decrees of that haughty and arrogant conqueror, whom He had raised up to be the scourge of His chosen people, when their apostasies and abominations rendered them unworthy of His tutelar care and protection; and they were transported into captivity "for their good" (Jer. 24 : 5). There they were cured of the idolatrous infection they had imbibed in Egypt and renewed in Canaan in the course of seventy years, when the remnant that returned were purified in the furnace of affliction, and had purged away a part of their dross (Isa. 1 : 25). *Hales*.—Again is the land keeping sabbath. And again is it "stillness unto God," till His voice shall waken land and people, whose are land and people, dominion and peace; till He shall come who is alike the goal and the fulfilment of all past history and prophecy—"a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." A. E.

**To fulfil threescore and ten years.**

It is essential to fix in mind that the carrying of Judah into exile was a series of events extending over at least twenty-four years, and not a single event. The seventy years so familiarly spoken of, following Jer. 25 : 11, 12; 29 : 10, may perhaps be regarded as a round

number rather than an exact number; though there are at least three ways in which it can be counted as exact. It is just seventy years, counting one of the terminal years, from the death of Josiah, B.C. 608, to the first year of Cyrus, 538 B.C.; it is just seventy, counting both the terminal years, from the deportation of Daniel, 605 B.C., to the first year of Cyrus, reckoned as 536 B.C.; it is just seventy years, counting one terminal year, from the burning of the Temple, B.C. 586, to the completing of Zerubbabel's temple, B.C. 516. We have no need to trouble ourselves to decide between these possible interpretations of the phrase.

*The sources of the history.* The biblical sources of information for the history of the period are the concluding chapters of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles; the Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations; the Books of Ezekiel and Daniel; some psalms (Ps. 137, for example); the genealogies in 1 Chronicles, and incidental notices elsewhere. Ancient extra-biblical sources of information for the time we are considering are the writings of Berossus (a Babylonian priest, after Alexander, who translated into Greek the history of Babylon) and of other Oriental historians, preserved by Josephus and others (see especially Josephus *Cont. Apion*, I. 19-21, and *Ant.* X. xi. 1); and occasional items in the inscriptions of the Babylonian and Persian kings. The Greek historians, Herodotus, B.C. 484 to about 400, Ctesias, B.C. 398 and earlier, and Xenophon, about B.C. 444-357, wrote popular histories, including these times, but without that careful regard for facts that characterizes the Oriental historians. Josephus, about A.D. 100, repeats the accounts given in the Bible.

*The chronology.* The dates for this and the subsequent times can be best studied by referring them to the scheme known as the canon of Ptolemy. Whatever be true of certain views of history implied in this canon, no one disputes its correctness as a scheme for giving names to the years in their succession. By this canon, the years for the time now under consideration are named as follows:

- B. C. 625-605 are the 21 years of Nabopolassar.
- B. C. 604-562 are the 43 years of Nebuchadnezzar.
- B. C. 561-560 are the 2 years of Evil-merodach.
- B. C. 559-556 are the 4 years of Neriglissar.
- B. C. 555-539 are the 17 years of Nabonidus.
- B. C. 538-530 are the 9 years of Cyrus.

W. J. B.

**2 Chron. 36 : 22, 23.** These closing verses of 2 Chronicles are nearly identical with the first three verses of Ezra, and are there placed for comment. B.

These last two verses of this book have a double aspect. 1. They look back to the prophecy of Jeremiah, and show how that was accomplished (verse 22). God had, by him, promised the restoring of the captives, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, at the end of seventy years; and that time to favor Zion, that set time, came at last. After a long and dark night, the dayspring from on high visited them. God will be found true to every word He has spoken. 2. They look forward to the history of Ezra, which begins with the repetition of these last two verses. They are there the introduction to a pleasant story, here they are the conclusion of a very melancholy one; and so we learn from them that though God's Church be cast down, it is not cast off; though His people be corrected, they are not abandoned; though thrown into the furnace, yet not lost there, nor left there any longer than till the dross be separated. Though God contend long, He will not contend always. The Israel of God shall be fetched out of Babylon in due time, and even the dry bones made to live. It may be long first; but the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie; therefore, though it tarry, wait for it. H.

Thus closes the first period of the Jewish history; and, in the ordinary course of human events, we might expect the national existence of the Israelitish race. The common occupancy of their native soil seems in general the only tie that permanently unites the various families and tribes which constitute a nation. As long as that bond endures, a people may be sunk to the lowest state of degradation; they may be reduced to a slave-caste under the oppression of foreign invaders; yet favorable circumstances may again develop the latent germ of a free and united nation—they may rise again to power and greatness, as well as to independence. But when that bond is severed, nationality usually becomes extinct. A people transported from their native country, if scattered in small numbers, gradually melt away, and are absorbed in the surrounding tribes; if settled in larger masses, remote from each other, they grow up into distinct commonwealths; but in a generation or two the principle of separation, which is perpetually at work, effectually obliterates all community of interest or feeling. If a traditionary remembrance of their common origin survives, it is accompanied by none of the attachment of kindred; there is no family pride or affection; there is

no *blood* between the scattered descendants of common ancestors. For time gradually loosens all other ties; habits of life change; laws are modified by the circumstances of the state and people; religion, at least in all polytheistic nations, is not exempt from the influence of the great innovator. The separate communities have outgrown the common objects of national pride; the memorable events of their history during the time that they dwelt together; their common traditions, the fame of their heroes, the songs of their poets, are superseded by more recent names and occurrences; each has his new stock of reminiscences, in which their former kindred cannot participate. Even their languages have diverged from each other. They are not of one speech, they have either entirely or partially ceased to be mutually intelligible. If, in short, they meet again, there is a remote family likeness, but they are strangers in all that connects man with man or tribe with tribe.

One nation alone seems entirely exempt from this universal law. During the Babylonian Captivity, as in the longer dispersion under which they have been for ages afflicted, the Jews still remained a separate people. However widely divided from their native country, they were still Jews; however remote from each other, they were still brethren. What, then, were the bonds by which Divine providence held together this single people? What were the principles of their inextinguishable nationality? Their law and their religion. Their law, of the irreversible perpetuity of which they were steadfastly convinced, and to which at length they adhered too long and too pertinaciously. Their religion, which, however it might admit of modifications in its main principles, remained unalterable. Under the influence of these principles, we shall hereafter see the Jewish people resuming their place among the nations of the earth, and opening a new and extraordinary career, to end even in a more awful dissolution. *Milman*.

The Captivity opens just after the overthrow of one of the great monarchies and the destruction of one of the great cities of the ancient world, which had kept its ground for a thousand years. It ends with the fall of one that, in the colossal greatness of its power and the magnificence of its buildings, surpassed all others. It begins with the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and ends with that of Cyrus. It was a time of vast migrations, and struggles of races and of creeds. The religion of Buddha was working its mighty change in India. That of Zoroaster was entering on a new and more en-



ergetic life. Then it was that Epimenides and the Orphic brotherhoods that traced their origin to him were altering the character of the earlier creed of Greece, as represented by the Homeric poems; that Pythagoras and his disciples were laying the foundations of an asceticism which developed into a philosophy; that Solon was building up the intellectual and political life of Athens. In the far west Rome was already rising into greatness. The walls of Servius Tullius, yet more the constitution that bears his name, were marking out the future destiny of the Seven Hills. In the far East Confucius was entering on his work as the teacher of an ethical system which has kept its ground through all the centuries that have followed, which at present, modified more or less by its contact with Buddhism, divides with that system the homage of nearly all tribes and nations of Turanian origin. *Plumptre.*

*Condition of the Exiled Jews in the Period of Captivity.*

The condition of the people during the Captivity does not seem to have been one of special oppression. The people dwelt apart, maintaining their tribal distinction, under their own elders. In the apocryphal narrative of Susannah, also, it is assumed that the Jews in Babylon formed a special community, with a jurisdiction of its own. A true Israelite could indeed know no real happiness at a distance from the Holy Land. But the same word of prophecy, whose truth was proved by the judgment which had fallen upon them, exhorted them to wait with patience for the hour when the deliverance of Israel should appear in the doom of Babylon. For this future deliverance was Israel to be preserved in captivity. As the Levitical worship could not be carried on upon heathen soil (see Hos. 9 : 4), and the sacrifice of prayer had now to take the place of animal sacrifices, it was important to keep all the more strictly to those legal institutions whose observance was not connected with the Holy Land. Such ordinances would form a salutary fence for the people thus thrown in contact with the heathen, and a protection against a heathen mode of life; and this consideration explains why Ezekiel so emphatically insisted on the observance of the ceremonial law, and especially on the sanctification of the sabbath. The example of Ezekiel (cf. 14 : 1; 20 : 1, also 8 : 1; 11 : 25; 24 : 19) also shows that now, when the two other theocratic offices, the kingship and priesthood, were annulled, the leadership of the people devolved

exclusively on the *prophets*, who, by the proclamation of God's word and the delivery of prophetic counsel, afforded to the dispersion a point of support similar to that which they had furnished to the pious in the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. Perhaps it was from the custom which now arose among the Israelites, of gathering around a prophet to hear the word of God, that *synagogues* originated. It was during the Captivity, according to Zech. 7 : 3, 5; 8 : 19; that four days of *mournful commemoration*, kept by fasting, were added to the celebration of the Sabbath—viz., 1st, the ninth day of the fourth month, because on this day (2 K. 25 : 3; Jer. 52 : 6 sq.) the Chaldeans entered Jerusalem; 2d, the already mentioned tenth of the fifth month (Jer. 52 : 12) (subsequently exchanged for the ninth), in remembrance of the destruction of the city and Temple; 3d, a fast in the seventh month (Tisri), in remembrance of the murder of Gedaliah; and also, 4th, a fast on the tenth day of the tenth month (Tebeth), because on this day the siege of Jerusalem commenced.

But the prophets of God had, during the Captivity, a mission to fulfil to the *heathen* also. By their transportation to a heathen land, nay, to the chief seat of heathen divination, the light of the Divine word was set up among the Gentiles themselves, and an opportunity given to their soothsayers and augurs to try their powers against the revelation of the living God. The conflict waged by Jehovah against the gods of the land, when He delivered His people out of Egypt, was renewed with increased intensity at Babylon. The Gentile world was to learn by experience where the knowledge of the Divine counsel which guides the destinies of nations, and the foretelling of things yet future were to be found, and to judge by this standard of the real existence of its gods. To carry on this struggle was the special vocation of Daniel, who was educated at the Babylonian court in all the wisdom of the Chaldees, and raised to the highest honors; while the same contest is presented in the prophetic book of Isaiah (chaps. 40-66). From this it is evident that the oppression of the people on the part of the Chaldean rulers must have greatly increased during the course of the Captivity. To this two causes may have contributed—on the one hand, the rebellious conduct of such Jews as were not willing to wait patiently for the hour of deliverance promised by God, but resorted to remedies of their own; on the other, the undaunted testimony borne by the prophets against heathenism as well as

against the rebellious faction among the Jews themselves. The whole prophetic delineation of the servant of God, tried and glorified by sufferings, is based upon that experience of suffering in captivity by which the elect remnant of the nation was purified. *Oehler.*

The captives were treated not as slaves, but as colonists. There was nothing to hinder a Jew from rising to the highest eminence in the state (Dan. 2 : 48), or holding the most confidential office near the person of the king (Neh. 1 : 11 ; Tob. 1 : 13, 22). The advice of Jeremiah (29 : 5, etc.) was generally followed. The exiles increased in numbers and in wealth. They observed the Mosaic law (Esth. 3 : 8 ; Tob. 14 : 9). They kept up distinctions of rank among themselves (Ezek. 20 : 1). Their genealogical tables were preserved, and they were at no loss to tell who was the rightful heir to David's throne. They had neither place nor time of national gathering, no Temple ; and they offered no sacrifice. But the right of circumcision and their laws respecting food, etc., were observed ; their priests were with them. The Captivity is not without contemporaneous literature. In Tobit we have a picture of the inner life of a family of the tribe of Naphtali, among the captives whom Shalmaneser brought to Nineveh. Baruch seems, in Mr. Layard's opinion, to have been written by one whose eyes, like those of Ezekiel, were familiar with the gigantic forms of Assyrian sculpture. Several of the Psalms appear to express the sentiments of Jews who were either partakers or witnesses of the Assyrian captivity. But it is from the three great prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, that we learn most of the condition of the children of the Captivity. *Dic. B.*

It is during the Exile, while the temple-worship was in abeyance, that we find indubitable proof of the systematic meetings on fasts for devotion and instruction (Zech. 7 : 3-5 ; 8 : 19). Religious meetings were also held on Sabbaths and fasts, to instruct the exiles in the Divine law, and to admonish them to obey the Divine precepts (Ezra 10 : 1-9 ; Neh. 8 : 1-3 ; 9 : 1-3 ; 13 : 1-3). These meetings, held near the Temple and in other localities, were the origin of the *synagogue*, and the place in which the people assembled was denominated *the house of assembly*. Hence, also, the *synagogue* in the Temple itself. These *synagogues* soon became very popular, so that the psalmist, in depicting worship in the time of the Maccabees, declares that the many meeting-places of God—or "*the synagogues of God*," as the A. V. rightly renders it—have been laid waste. *C. D. Ginsburg.*

The employments of the Jewish captives, both in Assyria and in Chaldea, must have been very varied. The general superiority of the Hebrew character, both intellectually and morally, to that of other Eastern nations, would commonly secure the advancement and prosperity of the captives. Some rose to the very highest situations, such as Daniel, who became prime-minister ; Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who also got high promotion ; and afterward Nehemiah, who became cupbearer to the king of Persia. Many would be employed as craftsmen or artisans. We find the goldsmiths and apothecaries, for example, taking a considerable share in repairing the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah (Neh. 3 : 8). Many who had been accustomed to agriculture and gardening doubtless followed the advice of Jeremiah in the land of their captivity—"Build ye houses, and dwell in them ; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them." As a rule, the captives were not exposed to tyranny ; for it was the interest and policy of Nebuchadnezzar to make them comfortable. The laceration of their feelings was doubtless their chief misery ; but the generation born in Babylon would be less sensible of that pain than their fathers. Probably many who were settled in the country districts on comfortable farms and productive gardens became so fond of them as not to desire to return home. The companies that returned were probably gathered mainly from the more enterprising and more movable population of the towns. The total number of horses, camels, mules and asses brought back to Jerusalem was exceedingly small—not exceeding eight thousand. It is a proof that the spirits of the people must have revived somewhat, after the time when they hanged their harps upon the willows, that the cultivation of their musical gifts was not neglected. In the first company that returned there were two hundred singing men and women.

However they may have been scattered at first, or tossed hither and thither in Babylon and Chaldea, they contrived very wonderfully, for the most part, to preserve their genealogies. A few were unable to trace their pedigree when the restoration took place, but the greater part had preserved it as carefully as if they had been at home. In the arrangements adopted at the rebuilding of Jerusalem, strict regard was had to each person's family. Perhaps the prophecies of Ezekiel, who foretold the restoration of each tribe individually, may have specially stimulated them to the careful preservation of their genealogies. The spoken lan-

guage of the people underwent a change. To a considerable degree they adopted the Chaldee dialect. When Ezra read the law in Hebrew, at the restoration, he had to give the sense and make the people understand the meaning. But the greatest change of all took place in religion. The old love of idolatry was completely rooted out. Never again, in any part of their history, did the Jews show the slightest tendency to idols. The change seems to have been brought about more by the action of natural feelings than by any spiritual revival. The idolatry of the Chaldeans would be viewed with disgust, because it was the religion of their spoilers. A people banished and denationalized has always a strong inclination to cherish and cling to its national institutions and distinguishing glories. Those of the Jews were peculiarly their religious ordinances. That sense of superiority which refused to humble itself even under a Babylonian captivity would intrench itself amid the venerable institutions of Moses. Hence, perhaps, the reason why the love of idolatry that had characterized them in their earlier period was succeeded in their later by national pride, expectations of carnal glory under the Messiah, reliance on their own works and righteousness, and a tendency to overrate trivial observances and undervalue the weightier matters of the law. Nevertheless, the path of the true Israel—the election according to grace—waxed brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Many psalms were added to the canon during this period, along with the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel. The promises became clearer and brighter. The doctrine of the Messiah was presented with greater distinctness in the writings of Daniel; his work became better understood—“to finish transgression, make an end of sin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.” The doctrine of the resurrection of the body began now to assume a definite form (Ezek. 37:12; Dan. 12:2). Ezekiel presented the doctrine of the new heart and the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit more vividly than any former writer. Sacrifices continued to be offered; Daniel speaks of “the evening oblation;” and doubtless there was some place where as much of the Temple service as possible continued to be celebrated. But in general there must have been a great lack of religious ordinances; and the pious would be more and more thrown on private and family exercises of devotion. Thrice a day was Daniel accustomed to offer prayer in his house; and on certain occasions

he observed long seasons of special devotion. The way was gradually preparing for a more spiritual religion; although more than five hundred years had to run before Christ should announce that the time had come when neither in Mount Gerizim nor yet at Jerusalem men should worship the Father, but true worshippers everywhere should worship Him in spirit and in truth. W. G. B.

While Jeremiah remonstrated and wept and mourned, the hard heart of his countrymen became harder. While the Chaldean was applying his torch to the Temple, putting out the eyes of the royal family, or driving the captives before him at the point of his spear, there were, perhaps, no signs of contrition, nothing but sullen despair, or a disposition to *brave* it out. But in the land of their captivity it was different. According to that ancient reviving promise, when they were driven out into the uttermost parts of heaven, they bethought themselves, and repented and made supplication unto God, and prayed unto Him with all their soul, and He heard their prayer and maintained their cause, and gave them a new heart and a right spirit. That this was the case with numbers of them we have indubitable evidence. The Psalms which were composed after the Captivity are a proof of it. The liberality of the poor captives in contributing to the restoration of the city and the Temple, the three days' fast which the fifteen hundred people who accompanied Ezra kept at the river Ahava, the readiness with which they hearkened to the remonstrances of Nehemiah, the tears which they shed on hearing Ezra expound the law—all go to prove that they had been *refined* in Babylon, that God had chosen them in the furnace of affliction. Their bitter sufferings had worked out for them a purer national character.

The Captivity was the means of extirpating idolatry from the hearts of the people. After the return, we hear no more of this polytheistic tendency. The fires which ravaged their cities burned up the idols with them. The second Temple was never defiled by the Jews themselves with heathen abominations. Not this only, even the disposition to it seems to have been eradicated. How was it done? The circumstances of the exiles in their lonely abode on the plains of Babylon seem to have impressed upon them the folly of their old worship. The false god had shown no power to rescue them from the invading foe. Milcom and Moloch and Ashtoreth were dumb in the hour of their votaries' utmost need. They

saw, too, the connection between the slighted command of Moses and its predicted penalty. They provoked God to anger with their vanities, and a fire was kindled which burned to the lowest hell, which consumed their land with her incense, and set on fire the foundation of the mountains. The day of vengeance delayed, but at length it came and swept off the idolatrous nation with the besom of destruction. The poor, expatriated Jew had leisure now to study the neglected Pentateuch, and read the burning letters which the lawgiver had written. He did not need to search long for the commentary. It was seen in the brick-yards along the Euphrates; in the harps which were hung on the willows; in the bones which were bleaching on the desert.

The Captivity was the means of extending the knowledge of God far and wide. Some beams of heavenly light fell on many pagan tribes. The pious Jews acted the part of missionaries in all the regions whither they were driven. Who can describe the benefit of Daniel's spotless example in Babylon, of Ezra, the ready scribe in the law of Moses, of Mordecai's unbending conscientiousness, and of Nehemiah's tender spirit and manly boldness in Artaxerxes's court? The good influence was not confined in the walls of Babylon or Shushan. To the extremities of the vast empire the courier bore it. Allow that in many cases this religious influence was comparatively light, yet in the aggregate it could not be small. In having the knowledge of the true God by means of a written revelation, the Jews were immensely superior to all the rest of the world. Scattered over many regions by the hands of violence, they would be necessarily brought into direct conflict with the upholders of various idolatrous systems. Contrariety of views would lead to discussion; argument would arouse the slumbering intellect and conscience, and some at least would be led to worship, in spirit and in truth, Him whose manifestations in the works of nature they had previously neglected or misinterpreted.

God, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, was thus preparing the way for the light of the Gospel to shine over the whole earth. He always had thoughts of mercy to the Gentiles. In the old dispensation His *special* favors were confined to the Jews, but some drops in the shower fell on the parched wastes of paganism. We occasionally discern hints, pre-intimations, foreshadowings, of that spiritual and healing gift designed for *all* people; a faint yet increasing redness in the East

had for a long time indicated the spot where the sun was to appear. Those Psalms of David which predict a reigning Messiah, those passages in Isaiah which so graphically describe a suffering and atoning Redeemer, were doubtless carried by the captive Jews into the distant East. Their true meaning, for the most part, remained unperceived, yet some indefinite expectation of a great deliverer was excited. Hope may have sprung up in some solitary and dejected bosom. Some Gentile Simeon may have looked with feeble faith toward the coming Messiah. At all events, the Captivity laid the foundation for the speedier diffusion of Christianity when it did appear. On the day of Pentecost, devout Jews were gathered at Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, a people prepared of the Lord to carry the knowledge of His Son to the ends of the earth. *B. B. Edwards.*

Many Jews that remained in Babylon were, by the great changes that happened in the world, dispersed thence into all the adjacent countries. And hence we find that in Esther's time the Jews were dispersed throughout all parts of the vast Persian empire, that extended from India to Ethiopia, as you may see (Esth. 3 : 8). And they continued dispersed till Christ came, and till the apostles went forth to preach the Gospel. But these dispersed Jews retained their religion in this dispersion. Their captivity thoroughly cured them of their idolatry; and it was their manner, for as many of them as could from time to time, to go up to the land of Judea to Jerusalem at their great feasts. Hence we read in the 2d chapter of Acts that at the time of the great feast of Pentecost there were Jews abiding at Jerusalem out of every nation under heaven. These were Jews come up from all countries where they were dispersed, to worship at that feast. And hence we find, in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that wherever the apostles went preaching through the world they found Jews. Antiochus the Great, about two hundred years before Christ, on a certain occasion transplanted two thousand families of Jews from the country about Babylon into Asia the Less; and so they and their posterity, many of them, settled in Pontus, Galatia, Phrygia, Pamphylia and in Ephesus; and from thence settled in Athens and Corinth and Rome. Whence came those synagogues in those places that the apostle Paul preached in.

Now this dispersion of the Jews through the world before Christ came did many ways prepare the way for His coming and setting up

His kingdom in the world. One was that this was a means of raising a general expectation of the Messiah through the world about the time that He actually came; for the Jews, wherever they were dispersed, carried the holy Scriptures with them, and so the prophecies of the Messiah; and being conversant with the nations among whom they lived, they by that means became acquainted with these prophecies, and with the expectations of the Jews of their glorious Messiah; and by this means the birth of such a glorious person in Judea about that time began to be the general expectation of the nations of the world, as appears by the writings of the learned men of the heathen that lived about that time, which are still extant; particularly Virgil, the famous poet that lived in Italy a little before Christ was born, has a poem about the expectation of a great prince that was to be born, and the happy times of righteousness and peace that he was to introduce; some of it very much in the language of the prophet Isaiah.

Another way that this dispersed state of the Jews prepared the way for Christ was, that it showed the necessity of abolishing the Jewish dispensation, and introducing a new dispensation of the covenant of grace. It showed the necessity of abolishing the ceremonial law, and the old Jewish worship; for by this means the observance of that ceremonial law became impracticable even by the Jews themselves; for the ceremonial law was adapted to the state of a people dwelling together in the same land, where was the city that God had chosen; where was the Temple, the only place where they might offer sacrifices, and where it was lawful for their priests and Levites to officiate; where they were to bring their first-fruits; and where were their cities of refuge and the like. But the Jews, by this dispersion, lived, many of them, in other lands, more than a thousand miles distant, when Christ came, which made the observance of their laws of sacrifices and the like impracticable. And though their forefathers might be to blame in not going up to the land of Judea when they were permitted by Cyrus, yet the case was now, as to many of them at least, become impracticable; which showed the necessity of introducing a new dispensation, that should be fitted not only to one particular land, but to the general circumstances and use of all nations of the world.

Again, another way that this dispersion of the Jews through the world prepared the way for the setting up of the kingdom of Christ in the world was, that it contributed to the mak-

ing the facts concerning Jesus Christ publicly known through the world; for the Jews that lived in other countries used frequently to go up to Jerusalem at their three great feasts, which were from year to year; and so, by this means, they could not but become acquainted with the news of the wonderful things that Christ did in that land. We find that they were present at and took great notice of that great miracle of raising Lazarus, which excited the curiosity of those foreign Jews that came up to the feast of the Passover to see Jesus, as you may see in John 12:19-21. By the same means, the Jews that went up from other countries became acquainted with Christ's crucifixion. Thus the disciples, going to Emmaus, said to Christ, when they did not know Him (Luke 24:18), "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which have come to pass there in these days?" Plainly intimating that the things concerning Jesus were so publicly known to all men that it was wonderful to find any man unacquainted with them. And so afterward they became acquainted with the news of His resurrection; and when they went home again into their own countries, they carried the news with them, and so made these facts public through the world, as they had made the prophecies of them public before. After this, those foreign Jews that came to Jerusalem took great notice of the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the wonderful effects of it; and many of them were converted by it—viz., Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Egypt, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and the strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians. And so they did not only carry back the news of the facts of Christianity, but Christianity itself, into their own countries with them; which contributed much to the spreading of it through the world.

Again, another way that the dispersion of the Jews contributed to the setting up of the Gospel-kingdom in the world was that it opened a door for the introduction of the apostles in all places where they came to preach the Gospel. For almost in all places where they came to preach the Gospel they found Jews and synagogues of the Jews, where the holy Scriptures were wont to be read, and the true God worshipped; which was a great advantage to the apostles in their spreading the Gospel through the world. For their way was, into whatever city they came, first to go into the synagogue of the Jews (they being people of the same na-

tion), and there to preach the Gospel unto them. And hereby their coming and their new doctrine was taken notice of by their Gentile neighbors, whose curiosity excited them to hear what they had to say ; which became a fair occasion to the apostles to preach the Gospel to them. *Jonathan Edwards*

The two great moral results sought by means of this destruction of city and Temple and of this seventy years' captivity were—(a) to cure the nation of idolatry ; (b) to break down the false reliance on the mere externals of their religious system. The whole Book of Ezekiel should be read with these points in mind. Every chapter, almost every verse, shines in the light of these truths and bears to their illustration. Of his forty-eight chapters, the first twenty-four protest with unwearied breath against the national sin of idolatry ; set forth with perpetual reiteration the foulness of the sin, its terrible grasp on the national heart, its incessant and resistless demand for the most appalling retribution ; while all along the prophet labors to make the captive exiles believe that their ritualities and sacred things could by no means avert from them the judgments of the Almighty. Noticeably, it was not till the tidings came to them in their captivity that the city had actually fallen, and that the holy Temple did certainly lie in ruins, that this vain confidence broke down ! From this point the entire tone of the prophet changes ; the despondent, broken-hearted people needed the consolations of hope, and the prophet hastens to supply them. A great moral crisis had been reached in the discipline and culture of the Jewish people. Wonderfully, admirably, did the prophet Ezekiel adjust his messages accordingly.

Bearing in mind that it was never the thought of God to forsake His people utterly and forget forevermore His promises to Abraham and the mercies made sure to David, but was rather His purpose to replant the land of promise, we may note with admiration the wisdom of His sifting processes : first, in taking away the better elements into Babylon, leaving behind in Judea the men who had sunk physically and morally so low as to be of no particular account as elements of society. The king of Babylon was not looking out for religious men ; but he had need of men who had some force in them—some capability for labor and service. This, therefore, was one of the principles on which he sifted the conquered people of Judea. The other was equally simple. The men of vigor and valor were the men whom it would be dan-

gerous for him to leave behind. They might head another revolt. Therefore it was wise to take them away. Thus (unwittingly as to God's plans) he took away not merely such men as he wanted and dared not leave behind, but such men as God wanted wherewith to replant His Canaan in His due time. When seventy years had transpired, and the Lord put it into the heart of Cyrus to invite the Jews to return, the sifting process was again put in requisition—this time by making it a *call for volunteers*. Such a call would of course bring out the men of vigor and stamina enough to bear the strain of the fatigues of a four months' journey, to be followed by the labors and hardships of a new settlement ; and also men of heart and soul aflame with zeal and with love for the Zion of their fathers—men, moreover, whose faith took hold of God's everlasting covenant. The willing, the earnest and true-hearted—not the easy-going and indifferent—would respond to this call ; the men of moral heroism, who could welcome sacrifice and hardship for the love they bore to the land of their fathers' sepulchres and for their faith in the yet unfulfilled promises of His covenant. Some one has said that in looking for seed to plant New England, two and a half centuries ago, the Lord sifted two kingdoms (England and Holland) for the best they had. With equal truth it may be said that the Lord of providence, on the same wise principle, sifted the Jewish people twice over to get out the best seed for replanting the land of promise. The history of the Jews during this captivity is to be gleaned chiefly from the books of the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel—mostly from Ezekiel, because his prophetic life and labors lay among the exiles. H. C.

*The Relations of the Exiles from Judah to those from Israel.*

It is often assumed and asserted that the earlier exiles, especially those from the northern tribes, either lost their identity among the nations whither they were carried, or else became lost to history. On the latter supposition, the problem of the finding of the lost Ten Tribes is often brought up for solution. In opposition to all such views, weigh the following reasons for holding that the earlier exiles, both from Israel and Judah, became mingled with the exiles of Nebuchadnezzar's time, constituting the Jewish people, as it has ever since existed : 1. The known character of the Israelitish race for race-persistence. 2. The geographical statements as to where the exiles were located : (a) 1 Chron. 5 : 26 ; 2 K. 15 : 29 ;

17 : 6 ; 18 : 11, locate on a map the territories assigned to the exiles of the Ten Tribes ; (b) the references in Jer. 24 : 5 ; 28 : 4, 6 ; 50 : 8 ; 51 : 6, etc., locate the destination of Nebuchadnezzar's exiles ; (c) Jer. 29 : 14, 7 ; 3 : 18 ; Ezek. 1 : 2, etc., with many of the passages cited below, Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of the exiles of Nebuchadnezzar's time as not confined to Babylonia, but living in all the countries, and especially in the "north," whither the Ten Tribes had formerly been carried ; (d) Ezra 1 : 1, 3, 4, etc. ; Esth. 2 : 5, 6 ; 3 : 8 ; 8 : 8-17, etc., from fifty to a hundred years later, these exiles of Nebuchadnezzar's time were found in all parts of the Persian empire. 3. (a) Jer. 3 : 12, 18 ; 31 : 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and very many passages, Jeremiah testifies that Israel of the Ten Tribes was living in the north, scattered among all the nations, in his time ; (b) the same passages and Jer. 31 : 18, 20 ; 50 : 19, etc., it is promised that Israel, as distinguished from Judah, shall be restored from the north country and all the nations, to Palestine ; (c) Jer. 3 : 18 ; 30 : 3 ; 31 throughout ; 50 : 20 ; 51 : 5 ; Ezek. 37 : 16-22 ; Zech. 8 : 13, and very many places, it is represented that Judah and Israel are dwelling together in the north country, and among the nations, and will return together, the differences between them being effaced. 4. The different tribes are represented as still in existence, during and after the Babylonian exile : (a) Ezek. 48 and Rev. 7, apocalyptically, all the tribes by name ; (b) Ezek. 37 : 19 ; 45 : 8 ; 47 : 13, 21, 22, 23 ; Matt. 19 : 28 ; Luke 22 : 30 ; Acts 26 : 7 ; Jas. 1 : 1 ; Rev. 21 : 12, etc., the Twelve Tribes in general ; (c) Rev. 5 : 5 ; Ezra 1 : 5 ; Rom. 11 : 1 ; Luke 2 : 36 ; Acts 4 : 36, etc., Judah, Benjamin, Levi and Asher. 5. In Ezra and Nehemiah, and especially in Esther, the numbers of the Jews are too great to be reasonably accounted for on the supposition that they were all descended from the exiles taken away by Nebuchadnezzar ; it is the testimony of these books that the Jews who returned to Palestine were only a small part of the Jewish population of the Persian empire, and this is confirmed by all subsequent history. W. J. B. (See pages 261-264.)

*Daniel, Isaiah, Chaps. 40-66, Deuteronomy and the Levitical Code, as Related to the Post-exilic Period.*

*The work of Daniel.* The first six chapters of the Book of Daniel are a series of wonder stories—accounts of marvellous deeds wrought by Jehovah through His servants—with a few

explanatory narrative statements. This half of the book includes one brief apocalypse (2 : 31-45). The second six chapters are a series of apocalypses. These twelve chapters are easily distinguishable from the additional sections found only in the Greek copies. In regard to the canonical Book of Daniel, two questions are strongly disputed : How far is it historical? When was it written?

In view of certain recent discoveries, the historicity of the general situation presented in Daniel, as distinguished from that of some of the details, can hardly be regarded as longer open to doubt. Belshazzar is now known, from the inscriptions, to be an historical person (see Schrader—*e.g.*, K. A. T., p. 434 sqq.). Though the Darius of Daniel is still unexplained, that does not prove him to be inexplicable. The excavations at Naucratis and Tahpanhes in Egypt (see especially "Defenneh," chap. 7, in the fourth *Memoir* of the Egypt Exploration Fund) settle the question as to Greek colonies and Greek civilization there, and the necessary contact of both Jews and Babylonians therewith, in the times of Nebuchadnezzar and earlier ; and show, therefore, that the Greek terms in Daniel may be characteristic of the times of Nebuchadnezzar, rather than inconsistent with them. Such biblical passages as 2 K. 18 : 26 ; Isa. 36 : 11 are now reinforced by Aramaic inscriptions, refuting the argument that the Aramaic writing in Daniel proves the book to be a legendary product of a period later than the Babylonian. Some powerful influence at the seat of empire is required to account for the prosperity, the national feeling, the cessation from idolatry, the activity in national literature, of the exiled Jews of the Babylonian period ; and the statements made concerning Daniel and his companions precisely meet this requirement. Daniel is mentioned in Ezek. 28 : 3 ; 14 : 14, 20, as a distinguished example of wisdom and of power with God. He is spoken of as "Daniel the prophet" in Matt. 24 : 15. Josephus says that the book of Daniel was exhibited to Alexander the Great, *Ant.* XI. viii. 5. The argument from the silence of Ecclus. 49 is no stronger against the historical existence of Daniel than of Ezra. But if it be granted that Daniel was an historical person, then we cannot disregard his claim, made by the use of the first person, or by the statements of the narrative, to the authorship of most of the parts of the Book of Daniel, and therefore substantially of the whole. If it is said that the prayer in Dan. 9, *e.g.*, presupposes those in Ezra and Nehemiah,

it is easy to reply that the presupposition is the other way. In fine, both the Book of Daniel itself and the events mentioned in it seem, on their face, to belong to the seventy years of the exile; and the careful student will require more than merely negative proof before he assigns them to any other period.

*The second part of Isaiah.* I suppose that the analysis of the last twenty-seven chapters of *Isaiah* which regards these as a unit, made up of three divisions, each consisting of three times three short poems, is substantially correct. One of these poems mentions Cyrus by name, and others are commonly understood to refer to the burning of the Temple and the approaching return of the exiles from Babylon—*e.g.*, Isa. 44:28; 45:1; 64:11; 63:10. To one who denies the possibility of inspired prediction, this is conclusive evidence that these passages belong to a date when the arms of Cyrus were already threatening Babylon. To one who accepts the possibility of such prediction, the question arises whether we have here predictions or contemporary statements. The literary difficulties in the way of supposing that most of these prophecies were written in the times of Cyrus are very serious. Begin with Isa. 40, and note how steadily the writer maintains a Palestinian point of view, and speaks of Jerusalem as in existence, surrounded by her neighbor cities; was this written in Babylonia, while Jerusalem and her cities were desolate ruins? Read Isa. 46:1, 2; 48:14; 47:1 sqq., and note how accurately these statements fit what Sargon and Sennacherib say in regard to their captures of Babylon, while they fit nothing that is known in regard to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus. Or take the apocalyptic-liturgical prophecies of Ezekiel as one term in the line of prophecy, and the visions of Zechariah (Zech. 1-8) as another term, and inquire what sort of an intermediate term you have a right to expect, in accordance with laws of historical continuity. Can Isa. 40-66 possibly be that intermediate term? If this body of literature belongs to the seventy years, it is at least very different from the other literature of that period.

*The question of Deuteronomy.* Many of the scholars who hold that the body of laws in Deuteronomy was written in the times of Josiah, also hold that other parts of our present Book of Deuteronomy, say De. 1:5-4:40; 4:44-11:32; and chaps. 27-30, are separate pieces of composition, written by secondary Deuteronomists, in the times of the exile. But these parts of Deuteronomy, in their own text, date themselves just before the close of the career of Moses; the theory that they were written during the exile involves the supposition that their dates are fictitious. De. 28-29 are distinctly cited and referred to in Lam. 2:17 and context, as Jehovah's "word that He commanded in the days of old." The avowed writings of the exile are replete with Deuteronomic ideas, but widely different from Deuteronomy in style. Certainly, the natural impression made by the case is that these parts of Deuteronomy were influential in the times of the exile, not because they were contemporaneous writings, but because of a revived interest in an ancient book.

*The question of the Levitical Code.* Writers on the Pentateuchal analysis recognize in Lev. 17-26 a code of legislation which they say has been combined with later matter, but whose original form can be approximately restored. This code is assigned by Kuenen and those who agree with him to the last twenty years of the exile, largely on the ground of its affinity with the passages in Deuteronomy just cited, and with Ezek. 40-48. Evidently the one argument that these writers here regard as strongest is the closeness with which Lev. 26 and De. 28-29 fit the phenomena of the times of the exile. With those who accept the possibility of inspired prediction, this argument would have more weight if the fitness of the description were confined to the scenes of the Babylonian exile, instead of fitting the case of Israel from the deportation of the Ten Tribes to the present day. As in the case of the parts of Deuteronomy just mentioned, the testimony of the text of Lev. 17-26 and its general literary and linguistic character are against assigning it to the period of the exile. *W. J. Beecher.*



## Section 51.

## THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

THE Books of Ezra and Nehemiah are the historical introduction to the third period of Jewish history. The first or formative period is that of the exodus and the conquest of Canaan. The second, that of the kings, is the period of national development, when all that was possible to them as a nation was accomplished. The third period was that of national dependence, and it lasted six hundred years. From the return from captivity to the fall of Jerusalem, the history of the Jews is bound up with the policy of the great empires, Persia, Macedonia, Greece and Rome, on whose favor they depended, or to whom they offered a fruitless resistance. Just as the exodus and the conquest trained the people for the second stage in their development and prepared its way, so the third period prepared for the fourth—Judaism in its relation to modern history. The true destiny of Israel is now revealed, to exist as a "leaven" among the nations. The Divine purpose in the Israelitish people is accomplished in Christendom; religious susceptibility, fitness for inspiration, has been the signal endowment of the Jews; theirs is a spiritual, not a national glory. And the modern history of the unconverted remnant is not without significance; we see in them the natural stock out of which Christendom has grown. The tenacity and steadfastness which still characterize the race, their patience, gentleness and readiness to serve or to rule, are some of the elements of their fitness to affect most intimately the history of the world, some of their qualifications to be the depository of the promises of God. The period of the return is sometimes contrasted with that of the exodus as an unheroic with an heroic time. It is easy to exaggerate the force of this contrast. That is not an unheroic or uneventful history which contains, as its heart, the story of the Maccabees. Even in the two books—Ezra and Nehemiah—the narratives of the rebuilding of the altar, the foundation and dedication of the Temple, the building of the walls of Jerusalem, and the reorganization of a corrupt society, are not inglorious. The tact, the courage, the patience, the fidelity displayed awaken admiration; and some of the incidents strike the imagination and stir the soul. *Clarkson.*

Though the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

were undoubtedly regarded as one book in two parts, both by the Jewish Church and by the early Christian fathers, yet the judgment of modern criticism, that they were originally two distinct works, seems to be, on the whole, deserving of our acceptance. The general style of the two books is indeed similar; but still there are sufficient differences in the composition to mark distinct authorship. Nehemiah, moreover, opens in a way which indicates that it is not a continuation of any previous narrative, but a separate and substantive work, standing on its own basis. B. C.

It will be observed that the closing verses of Chronicles (2 Chron. 36:22, 23) are almost identical with the opening words of Ezra—a feature which has led many to believe that the works originally formed one continuous composition, and which, at all events, shows that the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah were recognized as forming a natural continuation of the history of the Chronicles. Those books had brought down the history to the first year of Cyrus, and the books before us contain the history of the re-establishment of the Israelite society by the return of colonists, their settlement in Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the Temple and city, and the reorganization of life and worship. The narrative begins in the Book of Ezra at the first year of the reign of Cyrus, B.C. 538, and it is dropped in Nehemiah soon after the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, B.C. 432; so that the two books together carry us over a space of about a century. The whole history of this time, however, falls into three clearly defined periods. The first, treated of in the first six chapters of Ezra, is the time that elapsed from the first return of exiles to the completion of the Temple; the second, of which an account is contained in the remaining chapters of Ezra, is the period of his activity as leader of the second colony that came to Judea; and the third, covered by the Book of Nehemiah, is the period of the activity of the two men in the reconstitution of the new community at Jerusalem.

The *first* period extends over twenty-three years—viz., from the first return of exiles in 538 till the completion of the Temple in the sixth year of Darius, B.C. 515. The whole of this period was anterior to the coming of Ezra,

and chaps. 1-6 of his book contain a succinct account of what was an arduous and almost hopeless struggle on the part of the first colonists to establish themselves in the city of their fathers. The *second* period begins with the seventh chapter of Ezra, and extends to the close of the book. These chapters tell us how Ezra brought the second colony from Babylon and settled them in Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes I., called Longimanus —*i.e.*, in the year B.C. 458 (Ezra 7:8). Since the former period ended with the sixth year of Darius, or 515, and this begins with the seventh year of Artaxerxes, there is thus an interval of fifty-seven years passed over without record. This space represents the remaining thirty years of Darius, the twenty years' reign of Xerxes, and the opening seven years of that of Artaxerxes. Thirteen years after the arrival of Ezra's colony Nehemiah appears at Jerusalem; and the *third* period, treated of in the Book of Nehemiah, and extending over twelve years, is the period of their joint captivity. In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah, cup-bearer to the king, having heard mournful accounts of the condition of his countrymen in Judea (chap. 1), obtained leave of absence from the court, and was appointed governor of Jerusalem.

Little as we are told of the personal histories of Ezra and Nehemiah, we perceive that they were eminently fitted for the crisis in which they appeared. It is evident that the efforts of the first colony under Zerubbabel and Joshua sufficed at most to preserve a lingering existence. It was only after the arrival of Ezra that the restored community took a new departure, and only by the energetic action of Nehemiah that it assumed a position in which it was able to unfold, under new conditions, its old religious life. It has been conjectured that probably the influence of Esther and Mordecai on Xerxes, the predecessor of Artaxerxes, may account for Jews being in such high regard at the court. It is clear that both Ezra and Nehemiah were in high estimation with the king, or they would not have been entrusted with the functions they were sent to perform; and it was providential that, at a time when the first colony was struggling for existence, these two men, of the seed of Israel, were raised up to guide their nation through a trying time and give it a constitution which would survive the successive dynasties under which the Jewish people lived. Ezra, a scribe, instructed in the law of Moses, was able to expound the principles of the religion, and to show their applica-

tion to daily life; Nehemiah, endued with full powers from the king, was a man of determined will, fertility of resource, and devotion to his people. And thus, at a crisis which became a reformation in Israel, the leaders possessed the intelligent conception of the thing needed, and the administrative capacity to effect it, without which no reformation can be brought about. So it is from this period that a new era in the life of the Jewish people is dated, and tradition assigns to Ezra a place next to Moses in the moulding of the religious life. The national unity was saved from being shattered into fragments by the Captivity; for the Temple with its service was the religious centre to which in all places of their wanderings the dispersed ever turned. *J. Robertson.*

#### *Authorship and Date.*

As to authorship and date, the proof seems to be adequate that the Book of Ezra was written either by Ezra himself or by some early contemporary. For, first, tradition affirms this, and should count for something; second, the place of Ezra in the Hebrew Bibles, next before Nehemiah and Chronicles, indicates the same thing; third, Nehemiah quoted the Book of Ezra, the narrative as well as the list, while Ezra was yet alive (Neh. 7:5 sqq.); fourth, the book contains no trace of elements later than Ezra. The question as to Nehemiah is less simple, but, with the analysis given above, is not so complicated as many suppose. The first and third divisions of the book definitely purport to be by Nehemiah (unless chaps. 8-10 be regarded as by an associate of his), and contain no elements inconsistent with this claim. The second division (11:1 to 12:26) is often said to mention events a century or more later than Nehemiah, but that is sheer carelessness of statement. The latest event mentioned is the registration of priests and Levites; and that registration, though it includes the name of Jaddua, is not said to have been brought up to the time when Jaddua was high-priest, but expressly limits itself "up to the days of Johanan" (12:23). It follows that Jaddua was enrolled before he became high-priest, perhaps to exclude some other claimant, and that "Darius the Persian" of verse 22 was Darius Nothus, B.C. 423-404, and not the later Darius. The date of the accession of Johanan is commonly given as 373 B.C., but was probably earlier. But if Nehemiah was a very young man in B.C. 445, it exhibits no extraordinary longevity if he was still living seventy-two years later, B.C. 373. There is no decisive

proof, therefore, that any work was done on the Book of Nehemiah later than his lifetime. Whether the chapters from 8 to 12 : 26 are by other hands than his may be an open question.

#### THE LAW IN THE TIMES OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

No one disputes that Ezra and men associated with him had something very important to do with the existence of the Hexateuch in its present form. Postbiblical tradition testifies very abundantly to this, making Ezra the second giver of the law, and counting his work on the law inferior only to that of Moses. The New Testament and Ecclesiasticus are indeed silent concerning this tradition, but the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah confirm it. But what was the actual work done on the Hexateuch by Ezra and his associates? Did they simply preserve authenticated copies and call attention to the laws, and procure the enforcement of them? Or did they themselves originally write most of the priestcode, and compile the Hexateuch as a whole? To answer these questions is to solve the whole problem of Hexateuchal criticism. At present we have only to do with that part of the answer which is found in the direct statements made in the accounts of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah.

No one disputes that, according to the accounts, these two men possessed in written form the legislation which they promulgated and enforced. No one disputes that the men of Nehemiah's great convocation were in possession of the historical statements contained in the Hexateuch and in the Books of Judges, Samuel and Kings, in the order in which these books now contain them. Neh. 9 : 6-8 summarizes from Genesis, 9-20 from Exodus and Numbers, 20-22 from Numbers and Deuteronomy, 23-25 from Joshua, 26-31 from Judges, Samuel and 1 Kings, and 32-35 from 2 Kings. No one disputes that the narrative of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah represents that the Hexateuchal legislation as a whole was then in existence. No one disputes that this narrative refers the legislation of which it speaks very prominently to Moses, and thus claims that it was, in the main, in existence from the times of Moses. This is limited, however, by the fact that these men sometimes also ascribe to "the prophets" the authoritative precepts to which they appeal. Apparently, they regard Moses as the first and greatest of the law-bringing prophets, having authority because he is "the man of God" (Ezra 3 : 2). This testimony is very explicit. If it is simply true and histori-

cal it settles the question. How are we to regard it? Is it trustworthy history? or incompetent history? or fiction? Is there any theory of the matter that can be reconciled with the idea that the priestcode was mainly written in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah? On examining the accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah, we should expect to find one class of phenomena in case the Hexateuchal legislation was then really ancient, and a different class of phenomena in case they themselves had just originated much of this legislation, baptizing it by an ancient name. It may be, therefore, that such an examination will indicate in which way we ought to interpret the testimony. If the Hexateuch was then not less ancient than the other pre-exilic sacred writings they possessed, we should expect that these men, in the use they make of it, would not very sharply distinguish it from the other writings. On the other hand, if they themselves had just compiled the Hexateuch into a code, for the purpose of giving character to the Judaism of their times, the new law-book would be, in their minds, sharply distinct from all other writings. As a matter of fact, they betray no consciousness of any such distinction; in the use they make of the sacred writings, the Hexateuch and the other books simply run together, with no drawing of any border line. We find here no such distinction between the law and the prophets, or between Moses and the prophets, as appears in the Jewish and Christian fathers of the later times, or even in the New Testament, or Josephus, or Ecclesiasticus. If the Hexateuch was really ancient in their times, we might expect to find them appealing to it in common with the other ancient sacred writings, for authority for the laws they were endeavoring to enforce; if it was a new law-book, just prepared by themselves, and having sacred sanction, we should expect to find that they had included in it all that they regarded as necessary for the times, so that their appeal would be almost exclusively to the new law-book, and not much to the other Scriptures. Actually, they appeal to the other Scriptures about as much as to the Hexateuch. Indeed, the institutions they foster are, to a very large extent, those not mentioned in the Hexateuch, but mentioned in the other books; notably in the books that treat of the times of David and Solomon. If the Hexateuchal legislation was then really ancient, we should expect that, when they came to enforce it, they would supplement it by such specifications and additional regulations as the changed condition of the times required; on

the other hand, if it was a law-book prepared by themselves, we should expect that they would put all such specifications and new regulations into the law-book itself, and would on no account admit any other legislation than that of the law-book. In fact, the accounts represent that they made new regulations in regard to almost every legal point they touched. By way of illustrating these principles, let us examine a few of the phenomena.

*Their mode of quoting the older Scriptures.* Their habit of intermingling the Hexateuch, in their citations, with the other books, has already been illustrated by the fact that they appeal to the prophets as well as to Moses, and by the fact that the historical recapitulation in Neh. 9 passes on, without a break, from the history recorded in the first six books of the Bible to that contained in the following books. It might be further illustrated by most of the instances that are cited for other purposes in the remainder of this paper. For the present we confine our notice to one illustration—that found in Neh. 1:5-11. In this passage are five citations from Deuteronomy and three from Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple, intermingled in the following order: 1:5 cites De. 10:17 and 7:9; 1:6 cites 2 Chron. 6:40, cf. 7:15; 1 K. 8:29, 52; 1:7 cites a current Pentateuchal phrase; 1:8, 9 is a *résumé* of De. 4:25-31, or De. 28:64 and 30:1-5, modified by 1 K. 8:46-50, especially 48, or 2 Chron. 6:36-39, especially 38; 1:10 cites De. 9:26; 1:11 cites 1 K. 8:50.

*Sacred persons.* In the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, we find the high-priest, priests and Levites, substantially as in the Hexateuch, if we allow the accounts in Deuteronomy and Joshua to supplement those of the priestcode. Otherwise, "the priests, the sons of Aaron," of Exodus and Leviticus are greatly unlike the post-exilic priests, being very few in number, and the close blood relatives of the high-priest. But the Gibeonites of the Hexateuch (Josh. 9:27) have disappeared, and in their stead we have Nethinim, and perhaps other Temple servants, in a service that is said to date back to David's time (Ezra 8:20 *et al.*). We further have "captains of the priests and Levites" (Ezra 8:29; 10:5) and singers and gatekeepers (Ezra 7:7, 24; Neh. 7:1 *et al.*), none of them anywhere mentioned in the Hexateuch. It is quite incredible that the usage described in the priestcode would have differed so from the usage then existing, if the priestcode had then only just been produced.

*The one sanctuary and the sacred year.* In

Ezra 7:15; Neh. 1:9, etc., the history of these times recognizes the Pentateuchal doctrine of a central sanctuary. In Neh. 10:34 (33) are mentioned the continual burnt offering, the new moons, the Sabbaths, and the appointed feasts. In these and other ways the sacred year of the Pentateuch is sufficiently, though not very fully, recognized. The Sabbath is mentioned many times in Neh. 9:14; 10:32 (31) sqq., 13:15 sqq., traffic on that day being the especial practice rebuked; this renders it significant that traffic does not appear among the many specifications of Sabbath-breaking that are given in the Hexateuch. Such specifications are numerous; if they had been prepared in the times of Nehemiah, and for these times, they certainly would not have omitted the one point that peculiarly fits these times.

*The Feast of Tabernacles.* Probably it is fair to assume that the first day of the seventh month (Neh. 8:1, 2) was observed as the "memorial of blowing of trumpets" (Lev. 23:24; Num. 29:1), though the account in Nehemiah says nothing of this. But the reading of the law on this day (1-8), and the gathering of the second day, with its study of the law (13), are both extra-Hexateuchal. In the absence of information we may assume that the day of Atonement was celebrated on the tenth day, according to Lev. 23:27; Num. 29:7-11. The narrative in Nehemiah specifically informs us that the Feast of Tabernacles was kept the seven days required by the law, with the "solemn assembly" on the eighth day; and that the people dwelt in booths according to the law. But the proclamation to go out into the mountain country and gather branches (Neh. 8:15) is not in the Hexateuch, but is an innovation of Nehemiah's, as are also some of the other details that are mentioned. And in Neh. 8:17 we are definitely informed that this celebration of the feast differed from any that had ever previously been held. It should further be noticed that the sending of portions as a festival custom appears only in Neh. 8:10, 12; Esth. 9:19, 22, and possibly 2 Chron. 31:19. There is no hint of it in the Hexateuch, though there may possibly be in 1 Sam. 1:4, 5.

*The public reading of the Book of the Law.* Such reading, at the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8:18 and perhaps 13:1), was according to De. 31:10-13, provided we assume that the first year of Nehemiah was "the year of release," at "the end of seven years." In Neh. 8:2, 3, the reading is in the public assembly (*qahal*), and before women as well as men, as required by the precept in Deuteronomy. The

portion said to have been read (Neh. 13 : 1) is from Deuteronomy ; very likely the same is true of the reading of 8 : 1 sqq., since the weeping there spoken of would very naturally attend the threats made in Deuteronomy. The precept concerning the dwelling in booths (Neh. 8 : 14) is, of course, not from Deuteronomy, but that was brought to light, not by the public reading in the congregation, but by special instruction given to certain selected persons (8 : 13). On the whole it seems probable that the directions given in Deuteronomy were followed, as far as they went ; but the account in Nehemiah mentions many particulars not provided for in Deuteronomy : the reading on the first day of the month, the special instruction on the second day, the reading at the fast, the twenty-fourth day (9 : 3), and the whole ritual of the reading, including the " tower of wood," the priests on either hand, the standing of the people, the blessing by the reader, the response by the people, the explaining by the Levites (8 : 4-9). If the priestcode had then just been written, largely for the purpose of supplementing Deuteronomy by giving details of ritual, is it likely that it would be thus silent in regard to all these regulations?

*Sacred services.* In Neh. 10 : 33-40 ; Ezra 7 : 16, 17 ; 8 : 28, 35 ; 9 : 4, 5 ; 10 : 19, *et al.*, are mentioned the shewbread, the burnt offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the meal offering, the drink offering, the tithes, the firstfruits, the firstlings, free-will offerings of more than one sort, the fact that the priests and the sacred vessels are holy to Jehovah, and, in fine, so full a list of the Pentateuchal sacred services as to justify us in inferring that the whole Pentateuchal system of worship was in operation. But the variations mentioned are very considerable, and that though the whole space given to these matters extends only to a few sentences. " The evening meal offering " is spoken of in Ezra 9 : 4, 5 in a way that can hardly be paralleled in the Pentateuch. In Neh. 10 : 35 sqq. several details are added to the Pentateuchal precepts in regard to tithes and firstfruits, and a new precept given for bringing these " unto the chambers." The yearly poll-tax of one third of a shekel for Temple expenses, Neh. 10 : 33 (32), is new, being an entirely different thing from the half-shekel tax of Ex. 30 : 11 sqq. ; 38 : 25 sqq., which was paid once for all, and was used for building and not for current expenses. The wood offering and the casting of lots for it, Neh. 10 : 35 (34), are entirely new. These differences of detail would be significant, even if

they stood alone. But in addition to these is the fact that the public religious services on which most stress is laid, in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, are of a kind that do not appear at all in the Hexateuch. The solemn entering into oath of Neh. 10 : 30 (29) might indirectly find precedent in De. 29 : 11 sqq., though nothing of the kind is indicated by either the circumstances or the phraseology. But the sealing of Neh. 10 : 1, 2 (9 : 38 ; 10 : 1), as a public religious act, has no parallel in the Hexateuch. Prominent among the religious services of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah is public fasting, with wearing of sackcloth and earth upon the head (Ezra 8 : 23 ; Neh. 9 : 1) ; nothing of the kind is required in the Pentateuchal legislation. Similar statements might be made in regard to public prayer, and in regard to the responsive services connected with the reading of the law (Neh. 8 and 9, *e.g.*). And the one religious service more prominent in these accounts than any other is choral singing and music, Ezra 10 : 24 ; Neh. 10 : 29, 40 (28, 39) ; 11 : 22, 23 ; 12 : 27, 28, 29, 36, 42-47 ; 13 : 5, 10 ; no service of song of this sort is provided for in the Pentateuchal ritual, though song is often mentioned in the early history, and even choral singing (see Ex. 15 : 20, 21) is known. Indeed, the song service of Nehemiah's time is specifically referred to the times of David and Assaph (Neh. 11 : 17, 22 ; 12 : 24, 35, 36, 45, 46). And yet the priestcode is a book of ritualistic details. Is it likely that men wrote this book for the purpose of regulating the ritual of their times, and yet omitted from it all these important matters in the ritual of their times?

*Usury, the redemption of Israelites sold to foreigners, and the year of release.* On the supposition that the first year of Nehemiah was the year of release, and perhaps even without this supposition, what is said in Neh. 5 and in Neh. 10 : 32 (31) fits well enough the precepts given in Ex. 23 : 11 ; 22 : 25-27 ; Lev. 25 ; De. 15 : 1-11, etc. There are some resemblances of phraseology which seem to show that reference to these passages in the Pentateuch was intended. But even in this case the precept used is to be found in the other sacred books, as well as in the Hexateuch.

*Separation from the peoples of the countries.* In this central reform of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, the two prominent points are the exclusion of foreigners from the *qahal*, or national assembly, and the refusal of intermarriage. The exclusion from the assembly (see Neh. 13 : 1-3, citing De. 23 : 3-6, and see also Neh. 2 : 20, *et al.*) may fairly be said to be based on

the precept in Deuteronomy, as interpreted by the general tenor of the Pentateuchal legislation, with its requirement that Israel should be a people set apart to Jehovah. The case is somewhat different regarding the marriages with foreign women. When this offence is spoken of briefly, in Ezra and Nehemiah, it is simply described as taking foreign wives (Ezra 10 : 2, 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 44 ; Neh. 13 : 27). But marriages with foreign women are not, in these terms, forbidden in the Hexateuch, while they are disapproved in 1 K. 11 : 1, 8, and probably in Prov. 2 : 16 ; 5 : 20 ; 6 : 24 ; 7 : 5 ; 20 : 16 ; 23 : 27 ; 27 : 13. Moreover, 1 K. 11 : 1, 8 is definitely cited in Neh. 13 : 26. In the passages in Ezra and Nehemiah where the offence is further defined, the appeal is to the prophets, as well as to the law, Ezra 9 : 11 ; 10 : 3 ; Neh. 10 : 29-31 (28-30). The phraseology cited is partly from the Hexateuch and partly from the other Scriptures (Ezra 9 : 1, 2, 10-12, etc.). The Hexateuchal precepts appealed to originally cover only the case of the Canaanite tribes, and apply to the other peoples to whom Ezra and Nehemiah apply them, only when interpreted by the other Scriptures, or by Ezra and Nehemiah themselves. (See De. 7 : 1-4 ; Ex. 34 : 16 ; Josh. 23 : 12 ; 1 K. 11 : 1, 2.) Surely, if the Hexateuchal laws had just been re-edited, and part of them just written, they would have been made to fit the cases in hand, and would not have needed to be extended by usage and interpretation, in order to make them apply to those cases. This consideration has all the more force, when we find that the Hexateuch provides no penalty or remedy for the offence, but leaves that to be done by Ezra and Nehemiah themselves.

It cannot be necessary to pursue the argument further. Evidently the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah represent the whole body of the Hexateuchal legislation as ancient when Ezra and Nehemiah lived. Distinctly, they regard these men not as the originators of that legislation, but as students, promulgators and possibly revisers of it. *Willis J. Beecher.*

#### HISTORICAL OUTLINE : CYRUS, CAMBYSES AND DARIUS.

The conquest of Babylonia by Cyrus took place in the year 538 B.C. He was already master of Persia, Media and Lydia ; and the overthrow of the empire of Nebuchadnezzar extended his dominions from the mountains of the Hindu Kush on the east to the shores of the Mediterranean on the west. He had begun as the king only of Anzan or Elam, whose power

seemed but "small" and contemptible to his neighbor, the great Babylonian monarch. But his victory over the Median king Astyages and the destruction of the Median empire made him at once one of the most formidable princes in Western Asia. The latter years of the life of Cyrus were spent in extending and consolidating his power among the wild tribes and unknown regions of the far East. When he died, all was ready for the threatened invasion of Egypt. This was carried out by his son and successor, Cambyses, who had been made "king of Babylon" three years before his father's death, Cyrus reserving to himself the imperial title of "king of the world." Soon after his father's death he stained his hands with the blood of his brother Bardes, called Smerdis by Herodotus, to whom Cyrus had assigned the eastern part of his empire. Cambyses was subsequently tormented with remorse for the deed, but this did not prevent the punishment that it eventually entailed. A Magian, Gaumâtâ or Gomates by name, who resembled Bardes in appearance, came forward to personate the murdered prince, and Persia, Media and other provinces at once broke into rebellion against their long-absent king. When the news of this revolt reached Cambyses he appointed Aryandes satrap of Egypt, and, if we may believe the Greek accounts, set out to oppose the usurper. He had not proceeded far, however, before he fell by his own hand.

The false Bardes was now master of the empire ; but he had not reigned more than seven months before a conspiracy was formed against him. Darius, son of Hystaspes, attacked him at the head of the conspirators, in the land of Nisæa in Media, and there slew him, on the 10th day of April, B.C. 521.

Darius, like Cambyses, belonged to the royal Persian race of Akhæmenes. Teispes, the great-grandfather of Cyrus, who had conquered Elam and established his power there, was also the great-grandfather of Hystaspes, the father of Darius. The ancestors of Hystaspes had remained in Persia, and, according to the express testimony of Darius, had there ruled as kings. [Then followed a series of revolts in Elam, Babylon, Persia, Susiana and among the Medes, the Parthians and other great tribes, extending over a period of seven years, when finally Darius completed the reconquest of the empire of Cyrus and Cambyses.]

During this period of confusion and civil war, the Jewish community at Jerusalem were exposed, without protection or chance of redress, to the exactions of their Phœnician neighbors,

the inroads of the Bedouins, and the bitter hostility of the Samaritans. The picture presented to us by the Book of Ezra and the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah is what we should expect. Even in much later days, when the empire had enjoyed for years the fruits of the organized government established by Darius, the roads were still so unsafe that Nehemiah required an armed escort when he was traveling. Gashmu and his Arabs encamped in the near neighborhood of Jerusalem, and the Samaritan governor could plot the assassination of the Jewish "Tirshatha." We need not wonder, therefore, that the rebuilding of the Temple, which had been begun with such zeal and hopefulness by the returned exiles, should have "ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius." "The people of the land," whether Samaritans or Canaanites, prevented the work, partly by misrepresentations to the king, partly by active opposition when the central authority had been destroyed, while the impoverished Jews themselves lost heart and ability for carrying it on. Civil war had been followed, as usual, by blight and famine (Hag. 2 : 16, 17), and a small and unprotected community could do but little in times when "there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in, because of the affliction: for" God had "set all men every one against his neighbor" (Zech. 8 : 10).

It was in the second year of Darius (Ezra 4 : 24; Hag. 1 : 15), B.C. 520, the twenty-fourth

day of the sixth month, Elul, or August, that "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high-priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people," so that they recommenced the restoration of the Temple. How long they were permitted to go on with the work undisturbed we do not know. It was finished on the third day of the twelfth month, Adar, of the sixth year of Darius. *Sayce.*

The history of the downfall of the great Babylonian Empire, and of the causes, humanly speaking, which brought about the restoration of the Jews, has recently been revealed to us by the progress of Assyrian discovery. We now possess the account given by Cyrus himself, of the overthrow of Nabonidos, the Babylonian king, and of the conqueror's permission to the captives in Babylonia to return to their homes. The account is contained in two documents, written, like most other Assyrian and Babylonian records, upon clay, and lately brought from Babylonia to England by Mr. Rassam. One of these documents is a tablet which chronicles the events of each year in the reign of Nabonidos, the last Babylonian monarch, and continues the history into the first year of Cyrus, as king of Babylon. The other is a cylinder, on which Cyrus glorifies himself and his son Cambyses, and professes his adherence to the worship of Bel-Merodach, the patron-god of Babylon. *Sayce.*

## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF THE PERSIAN PERIOD.

588. Cyrus issues his decree for the return of the Jews. Fifty thousand return with Zerubbabel and Jeshua.
587. Rebuilding of the Temple begun.
586. The opposition of the Samaritans begins. Death of Daniel (?).
580. Death of Cyrus. His son Cambyses, the Ahasuerus of Ezra 4 : 6, was associated with his father 582, and reigned till 521.
529. (?) Letter from the adversaries in Samaria to Susa.
525. Conquest of Egypt by Cambyses.
522. Usurpation of the Magian Gomates, who claims to be Smerdis, the murdered brother of Cambyses.
- 522-520. The building of the Temple stopped by decree of the false Smerdis, the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4 : 7-24.
- 521-486. Darius, son of Hystaspes, reigns. He confirms the decree of Cyrus, adding other concessions and conditions.
520. Haggai and Zechariah encourage the people to rebuild the Temple. (Confucius in China.)
516. The Temple finished.
515. The Temple dedicated in March. (Blank in records of Judea until 458.)
510. The Tarquins expelled from Rome, and the republic established (A. U. C. 244).
504. The burning of Sardis by the Greeks provokes the Persian war.
490. First Persian expedition defeated by the Athenians at Marathon. (Death of Gautama Buddha.)
486. Death of Darius, and accession of his son Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther, who reigns till 465.
483. Xerxes puts away Vashti.
480. Second Persian invasion of Greece, and battles of Thermopylæ and Salamis, followed by that of Platea in the following spring.
479. Esther becomes queen.
473. Queen Esther saves the Jews from destruction. Feast of Purim instituted.
466. The battle of Eurymedon ends the Persian war.
465. Death of Xerxes, who is succeeded by Artaxerxes I. (Longimanus), who reigned forty-one years (until 425).
458. The second return, under Ezra.
457. Great reformation under Ezra. Fifth Book of the Psalms compiled (?).
445. Nehemiah at Susa hears of the miseries of Jerusalem, and obtains leave of absence from Artaxerxes I.
444. Nehemiah goes up to Judea as royal governor, and rebuilds the walls despite the opposition of Sanballat. The reading of the Law, and the covenant to keep it.
433. Nehemiah returns to Artaxerxes.
- 431-404. The Peloponnesian war of Sparta and the Dorian cities against Athens and the Ionian cities.
428. (?) Nehemiah again obtains leave of absence, and the next year returns to Jerusalem, and institutes further reforms.
424. Artaxerxes I. dies, and is succeeded by Xerxes II. (Sogdianus), who reigns less than a year, and is followed by Darius II. (Nothus), in whose reign the Samaritans build their temple on Mt. Gerizim.
- 415-413. Athens is prostrated by the failure of the Syracusan expedition.
- 405-359. Reign of Artaxerxes II. (Mnemon).
400. Prophecies of Malachi (?). The retreat of the Ten Thousand Greeks from the invasion of Persia through Armenia to the Black Sea.
399. Death of Socrates by poison.
390. The Gauls capture Rome.
387. The Peace of Antalcidas abandons the Greek cities of Asia to the Persians.
370. (?) Death of Nehemiah.

A. C. Smith.



# BOOK OF EZRA.

## Section 52.

### INTRODUCTION.

THE book is a plain and simple history, devoid of all stirring incidents, the Jews under the early Persian monarchs being members of a great settled empire, and living peaceably in the enjoyment of equal rights with other Persian subjects. The matters to which it directs attention are three and three only: (1) The number, family and (to some extent) the names of those who returned from Babylonia with Ezra and with Zerubbabel; (2) the rebuilding of the Temple and the circumstances connected therewith; and (3) the misconduct of the returned Jews in respect of mixed marriages, and the steps taken by Ezra in consequence. The first of these subjects is treated in chap. 2 and in chap. 8: 1-20; the second in chaps. 1: 3-5 and 7; and the third in chaps. 9 and 10.

The Book of Ezra is made up of *two completely distinct sections*. In the first, which extends from chap. 1 to the end of chap. 6, the writer treats of the return from the Captivity and of the events following thereupon, and included within the space marked out by the dates B.C. 538-516. This narrative thus covers a period of twenty-three years. It belongs to the time when Zerubbabel was governor of Judea, Jeshua high-priest and Zechariah and Haggai prophets. The second portion commences with chap. 7, and continues to the end of the book. It relates the commission given to Ezra by Artaxerxes Longimanus in the seventh year of his reign (B.C. 458), the journey of Ezra to Jerusalem, and his proceedings there in reference to the mixed marriages during the year of his arrival and the early part of the next. The entire narrative of this portion is comprised within the space of twelve months, commencing April, B.C. 458, and terminating April, B.C. 457. There is thus a gap of fifty-seven years between the first section of the book and the second. B. C.

The Book of Ezra, in its two parts, may be accounted for by the very simple hypothesis

that a narrator who wrote in Hebrew, and who speaks of Ezra in the third person, took five pre-existing documents and put them together, supplementing them by such additional statements as he found necessary. The five are: first, the proclamation of Cyrus (1: 2-4); second, the list (2: 1-67); third, the Aramaic document (4: 8 to 6: 18); fourth, the proclamation of Artaxerxes, in Aramaic (7: 12-26); fifth, memoranda written in the name of Ezra, in the first person (7: 27-9: 15). In contrast with this, in Nehemiah, there is a main narrative written in the first person, in the name of Nehemiah, with certain incorporated sections in which Nehemiah is spoken of in the third person. The narrative in the first person is in two parts; and the other sections are placed, one after the other, between the two. W. J. B.

In style Ezra more resembles Daniel than any other Book of Scripture, always excepting Chronicles. The mixture of Chaldee with Hebrew it has in common with both Daniel and Jeremiah; but its language and phrases are unlike Jeremiah's, while they are often very near to Daniel's. This may be accounted for by these two writers being both Babylonian Jews, while Jeremiah was perhaps never at Babylon, and at any rate formed his style and wrote most of his prophecies in Palestine. Ezra's tone is dignified and nearly uniform, the only passage which rises into eloquence being his prayer (9: 6-15), which is not unlike Daniel's (9: 4-19). His work contains a considerable number of words which are either known or suspected to be Persian, and which are either peculiar to him or common to him with writers of the post-captivity period only. Altogether, the language is such as might have been looked for under the circumstances of the time, when the contact into which the Jews had been brought with the Babylonians and the Persians had naturally introduced among them

a good many foreign words and modes of speech.

The *authenticity* of the history of Ezra is scarcely denied. As the narrative contains nothing miraculous, nothing even out of the common course, except the restoration of the Jews to their country, which is too certain a fact to be called in question, rationalistic critics have been under no temptation to throw doubt on this portion of the sacred writings. If the author be Ezra, it is manifest that the latter section (chap. 7 to end), considered as a mere human work, possesses the highest degree of historical credibility, being written by the chief actor in the scenes recorded in it. And even for the former section (chaps. 1-6), a person circumstanced as Ezra was would be in a position to write an authentic narrative, since he would have access to whatever documents existed either in the archives of the Jews or in those of the Persians, and might further obtain from old men oral testimony with respect to most of the events commemorated. Internally, too, the narrative is highly probable, the actions and characters assigned to the several Persian kings being in accord with what we learn of them from profane writers, and the conduct of the Samaritans (chaps. 4 and 5), and of the Jews themselves (chaps. 9 and 10), being natural under the circumstances. B. C.

As to *authorship*, the general unity of style and conception which pervades the whole work makes it difficult to believe that the chief actor in the events it records was not also the writer of the entire book in which they are embodied. Indeed, it is denied by no one that a certain portion of the book (7 : 27-9 : 15), at any rate, is the composition of Ezra himself ; and it is just as little denied that the materials of which the book is composed were put together in their present shape by a single compiler. No valid reasons have been alleged why this single compiler should not have been Ezra "the scribe." The style of the portions which are admitted to belong to him agrees with that which we find elsewhere in the book ; and it is no argument to say that he would not have spoken of himself in the third person. Other historians and writers have done so ; in fact, one who had taken a leading part in the events he describes would naturally fall into an impersonal mode of referring to himself. *Sayce*.—The simple view that Ezra, who is admitted to have written at least one section, really composed the whole, using for the most part his own words, but in places inserting documents, is to the full as tenable as any other hypothesis. The general

harmony of the whole book already noticed, and the real uniformity of its style, are in favor of this view. The objection from the changes of person is of no great importance, changes of this kind often occurring in works admitted to be the production of a single writer, as in Thucydides and in Daniel. Moreover, tradition ascribes the whole book to Ezra ; and if Ezra wrote Chronicles, which is the view of many critics, then the connection of the book with Chronicles will be an additional argument in favor of Ezra's authorship. P. C.

The *subject-matter* of Ezra is the history of the chosen race from the accession of Cyrus to the spring of B.C. 437, the eighth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus ; or rather perhaps the history during such space of *that portion* of the chosen race which took advantage of the decree of Cyrus, and returned to its native country, Palestine. The time covered is eighty-one years. The scene is in part Babylon, in part Judea, in part the intermediate country. The *historical and chronological scheme* on which Ezra has been arranged must be regarded as established. The four kings of the earlier section of the book *must* represent Cyrus the Great, his son, Cambyses, the pseudo-Smerdis and Darius Hystaspes. The Artaxerxes of the latter section may possibly be Mnemon, but it is far more probable that he is Longimanus. G. R.

In the book the so-called *Chaldee* is used in the letter of Artaxerxes (4 : 17-22), and also in the whole narrative from 4 : 8 to 6 : 18. What is termed Chaldee is really an Aramean dialect, and the word "Syriac" employed in the Authorized Version would be a more accurate description of it. The term "Chaldee" is derived from the belief that it represented the language of Babylonia, which the Jews are supposed to have adopted during the exile. The decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions has shown that this was not the case. The language of Babylonia was the same as that of Assyria, and was as far removed as Hebrew from the so-called Chaldee. In fact, Assyrian resembled Hebrew much more than it resembled "Chaldee." Chaldee, or Aramaic, as we ought to term it, was really spoken by the Aramean tribes of Syria and Mesopotamia, some of whom extended as far south as the frontiers of Babylonia itself. After the decay of the Phœnician cities in the days of the second Assyrian Empire, Carchemish, the old Hittite capital, became the chief centre of trade in Western Asia, and commerce passed in large measure into the hands of Aramean merchants. Hence

it was that Aramaic became the language of trade, that was understood wherever mercantile transactions were carried on. *Sayce*.

#### LIFE-WORK AND CHARACTER.

By the time of Ezra there existed, not only the historical works of the Pentateuch, of Joshua and Judges, of Samuel and of Kings, but a vast amount of poetical writings, partly of a gnomic character, partly in the shape of psalms and hymns, partly in that of the collected writings of particular prophets, as Jonah, Hosea, Isaiah, Amos, Joel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the rest of those commonly known as "the major and minor prophets," whose works are still extant. There were also a number of compositions, well known to the writers of the time of the Captivity, which have since been wholly lost; as those quoted by the author of Chronicles: "The chronicle of King David" (1 Chron. 27 : 24), "the acts of Samuel the seer," "the acts of Nathan the prophet," "the acts of Gad the seer" (*ibid.* 29 : 29), "the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite," "the visions of Iddo the seer" (2 Chron. 9 : 29), "the acts of Shemaiah the prophet," "Iddo the seer on genealogies" (*ibid.* 12 : 15), "the commentary of the prophet Iddo" (*ibid.* 13 : 22), "the acts of Jehu the son of Hanani" (*ibid.* 20 : 34), "the commentary of the Book of the Kings" (*ibid.* 24 : 27), "Isaiah's acts of Uzziah" (*ibid.* 28 : 22), "the vision of Isaiah" (*ibid.* 32 : 32), and "the acts of Hosai," or "of the seers" (*ibid.* 33 : 19). It is beyond question that the exiles were in possession of a copious literature, varied in its character, and of high educational value to those who studied it.

Such being the condition of learning and literature during the time when Ezra was growing to manhood, we have further to inquire what was the probable course and line of his own studies and literary labors. If Ezra was, as he almost certainly was, the author of Chronicles, he must clearly have made the history of his nation, from its earliest beginning, one of the principal objects of his study. The writer of Chronicles has searched the archives of his nation with extraordinary diligence, and has gathered his narrative from original documents and the works of contemporary writers, with an indefatigable industry and a zeal above all praise. Ancient Hebrew tradition declares that Ezra was not only an author, but an editor. He is credited with a general settling of the canon of the Old Testament, with "the restoring, correcting and re-editing of the whole sacred volume according to the threefold arrangement of the Law, the Prophets and the Hagiog-

rapha, with the divisions of the *Pesukim*, or verses, the writing of the vowel points handed down by tradition from Moses, and the whole series of emendations known as the *Kēri*," and inserted ordinarily in the margin of Hebrew Bibles. The actual collector of the sacred books, their arranger and editor, could only be Ezra. The centre and "kernel" of the collection was "the Law." On the Law Ezra had for long years expended his most diligent labor, his most careful thought, all the resources of his learning (Ezra 7 : 6, 10, 14). He had probably, while at Babylon, collected the various copies of the Law brought with them from Palestine by the exiles, and when he took up his abode at Jerusalem had further collated such copies as he found there, thus forming a text which we may well regard as the basis, at any rate, of that which our Hebrew Bibles now give us. The other books which may reasonably be ascribed to his collection, and which we may believe him to have corrected and edited, are the Book of Joshua, attached to the Pentateuch in the Samaritan Version, the Books of the Kings, including those of Samuel, the earlier prophets, Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, a certain number of the Psalms, especially those traditionally ascribed to David, together with his own works—the Books of Ezra and Chronicles.

Besides these labors of a purely literary character, Jewish tradition assigns to Ezra the origination of certain institutions, which had for their object either the general direction of religion, or its systematic inculcation upon the people. It is certainly clear that Ezra had a body of counsellors who advised him in matters of religion. These probably constituted the germ out of which the "Great Synagogue" grew; and the later Sanhedrim was probably a revival in Græco-Macedonian times of the earlier "Great Synagogue," which after a time had died out.

For the systematical inculcation of religion upon the people at large, Ezra seems to have devised the local synagogue system, which is so striking a feature of the later Jewish Church, as exhibited to us in the New Testament. Something of the kind must have existed after the Captivity in the various lands to which the Jews were carried by their conquerors; but to Ezra probably belongs the introduction into Judea itself of local synagogues—places of worship distinct from the Temple—spread widely over the land, and thus multiplying almost indefinitely the centres of religious influ-

ence, whence instruction flowed to the people. Before the Captivity, now and then good kings, such as Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, sent special missions from the capital to the various provincial towns and villages, to stir up the religious life of the people, and to give them much-needed instruction (2 K. 23 : 8-21 ; 2 Chron. 17 : 7-9 ; 30 : 1-12). But vastly different from this was the establishment, over the length and breadth of the land, of these local centres of teaching, with their official staff, their regular stated meetings, their set forms of prayers, their systematic reading of the Scriptures, their psalmody and hymnody, their exposition of God's Word, and their power of excommunication. "It is hardly possible to overestimate the influence of the system thus developed. To it we may ascribe the tenacity with which the Jews adhered to the religion of their fathers, and (after the return from the Captivity) never again relapsed into idolatry. The people were now in no danger of forgetting the Law and the external ordinances that hedged it round. If pilgrimages were still made to Jerusalem at the set feasts, the habitual religion of the Jews, in and yet more out of Palestine, was connected much more intimately with the synagogue than with the Temple" (*Plumptre*).

He was student, critic, linguist, antiquary, historian, teacher and preacher, judge, governor, reformer of a religious system, second founder of a political community. We have to acknowledge in him one of the born leaders of men, one of those who have exercised upon the world a vast influence, and an influence almost wholly for good. Later Judaism—the Judaism of Maccabean times—which was the leaven that leavened the world and made the acceptance of Christianity possible, derived all that was best in it from him—its zeal, its fervent patriotism, its passionate attachment to the Law, its burning desire to keep itself unpolled from the impure idolatries and debasing superstitions of heathenism. Ezra gave to the later Judean community that stubbornness and strength which enabled it to resist and overcome the persecuting Hellenism of Antiochus, and to battle for years on almost equal terms with the mighty legions of Rome. Ezra's exaltation of the Law and earnest propagation of it, and provision for its continued propagation by his system of synagogues, together with his "fierce exclusiveness" and stern rejection of the heathen element that was creeping into the nation, was mainly instrumental in keeping alive that spirit of exclusive patriotism and uncompromising zeal which carried the people

through five centuries of struggle and difficulty. He had impressed upon the nation, or, at any rate, upon the better part of it, his own individuality. He reanimated the drooping spirits of his countrymen, and filled them with a new enthusiasm. He turned a few weak bands of despondent exiles into a vigorous and energetic people. Doubtless he was helped in the performance of his task by a powerful friend and coadjutor, the brave, strong-minded Nehemiah. But the merit of the work accomplished and its enduringness were due to him rather than his colleague, since he at once personally inaugurated the reforms (Ezra 9 ; 10), and by his institutions secured their continuance.

Ezra's faith in God is admirable. Amid all discouragements he clings to the "Unseen Support" of the Most High. Cheerfully he goes forth on his perilous journey, feeling that "the hand of the Lord his God is upon him" (7 : 6). Gratefully he acknowledges on reaching his journey's end, "I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me" (*ibid.*, verse 28). Boldly he declares to the Persian king—"The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him ; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him" (8 : 22). When no Levite will consent to accompany him among the exiles in Babylon, he does not despair, but makes fresh efforts which are attended with success, "because" (as he says) "of the good hand of our God upon us" (*ibid.*, verse 18). It is "the hand of God," which, he feels, delivers him and his company from "the enemy that lay in wait by the way" between Ahava and Jerusalem (*ibid.*, verse 31). When the terrible sin of the people in respect of the mixed marriages is brought before him, he flies at once to God for strength and support, and pleads with Him for the people's pardon with a fervor and an earnestness that make his prayer a model even for Christians (9 : 5-15). . . . As supreme governor of Judea, he is prompt and decided in taking the measures necessary to purify the Jewish community, while he abstains from all arbitrary acts, persuades rather than commands, and effects his purpose with the good will and hearty acquiescence of all classes. Placed in a subordinate position under Nehemiah after having held the entire direction of affairs, he shows no jealousy or discontent, but carries out with zeal the designs of his civil superior, is active within his own sphere, and does good service to the nation. Simple, candid, devout, sympathetic, full of energy, unselfish, patriotic, never weary in well doing, he occupied a most important

position at a most important time, and was a second founder of the Jewish state. Eminent alike as a civil governor, as an ecclesiastical administrator and as an historian, he left behind him a reputation among the Jews inferior only to that of Moses; and the traditions which cluster about his name, even if they had no other value, would at any rate mark the high esteem in which his abilities and character were held

by his countrymen. . . . Thus we may recognize in the great scribe, the great reformer, the second founder of the Jewish state, one who held the balance even between a religion of gloom and a religion of light-heartedness, and who set forth God before men's eyes in His true character, as at once "good" and "severe," merciful and just, a God of love and "a consuming fire." G. R.

## Section 53.

### THE FIRST RETURN UNDER JESHUA AND ZERUBBABEL.

EZRA, CHAPS. 1 AND 2.

2 CHRONICLES 36 : 22, 23.

**1** : 1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also  
**2** in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.  
**3** Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD, the God of Israel,  
**4** (he is God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods,  
**5** and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. Then *rose* up the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go  
**6** up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with  
**7** beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth  
**8** out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Shesh-  
**9** bazzar, the prince of Judah. And this is the number of them: thirty charges of gold, a thousand charges of silver, nine and twenty knives; thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second  
**10** sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

**2** : 1 Now these are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and that returned unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;  
**2** which came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar,  
**3** Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel: the children of  
**4** Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred  
**5**, **6** dred seventy and two. The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy and five. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and  
**7**, **8** twelve. The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of  
**9** Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.  
**10**, **11** The children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. The children of Bebai, six hundred  
**12** twenty and three. The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two.  
**13**, **14** The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. The children of Bigvai, two thousand  
**15**, **16** sand fifty and six. The children of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. The children of

17 Ater, of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and  
 18, 19 three. The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve. The children of Hashum, two  
 20, 21 hundred twenty and three. The children of Gibbar, ninety and five. The children of  
 22, 23 Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty and three. The men of Netophah, fifty and six. The  
 24 men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. The children of Azmaveth, forty and two.  
 25 The children of Kiriath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and three.  
 26, 27 The children of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty and one. The men of Michmas, an  
 28 hundred twenty and two. The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty and three.  
 29, 30 The children of Nebo, fifty and two. The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six.  
 31, 32 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four. The children of  
 33 Harim, three hundred and twenty. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred  
 34, 35 twenty and five. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and five. The children of  
 36 Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty. The priests: the children of Jedaniah, of  
 37 the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of Immer, a thousand  
 38, 39 fifty and two. The children of Pashhur, a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The  
 40 children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen. The Levites: the children of Jeshua and  
 41 Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. The singers: the children of Asaph,  
 42 an hundred twenty and eight. The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the  
 children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the  
 43 children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty and nine. The Nethinim the children of Ziha,  
 44 the children of Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth; the children of Keros, the children of  
 45 Siaha, the children of Padon; the children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children  
 46, 47 of Akkub; the children of Hagab, the children of Shamlai, the children of Hanan; the  
 48 children of Giddel, the children of Gabar, the children of Reaiah; the children of Rezin, the  
 49 children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam; the children of Uzza, the children of Paseah,  
 50 the children of Besai; the children of Asnah, the children of Meunim, the children of Neph-  
 51, 52 sim; the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur; the chil-  
 53 dren of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha; the children of Barkos, the  
 54 children of Sisera, the children of Temah; the children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.  
 55 The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Hassophereth, the  
 56 children of Peruda; the children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel;  
 57 the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth-hazzebaim, the  
 58 children of Ami. All the Nethinim, and the children of Solomon's servants, were three hun-  
 59 dred ninety and two. And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsha,  
 Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not see wthier fathers' houses, and their seed,  
 60 whether they were of Israel: the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of  
 61 Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. And of the children of the priests: the children of  
 Habaiah, the children of Hakkoz, the children of Barzillai, which took a wife of the daughters  
 62 of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name. These sought their register *among*  
 those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they  
 63 deemed polluted and put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they  
 should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thum-  
 64 mim. The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and  
 65 threescore, beside their menservants and their maidservants, of whom there were seven thou-  
 sand three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred singing men and singing  
 66 women. Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty  
 67 and five; their camels, four hundred thirty and five; *their* asses, six thousand seven hundred  
 68 and twenty. And some of the heads of fathers' *houses*, when they came to the house of the  
 Lord which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to set it up in its place:  
 69 they gave after their ability into the treasury of the work threescore and one thousand darics  
 70 of gold, and five thousand pound of silver, and one hundred priests' garments. So the  
 priests, and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the  
 Nethinim, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

The Book of Ezra consists of two parts—chaps. 1-6 and 7-10. The second part treats of Ezra and his times, and much of it is written in the first person, with Ezra for the speaker; for example, Ezra 7: 28; 8: 15-17, 21, 22; 9: 1, 3, 5. This points to him as the author. The first part treats of Zerubbabel and his times—events that occurred from fifty-eight to eighty years earlier than the coming of Ezra to Palestine. This part consists of three documents, joined by a few narrative statements: First, the proclamation of Cyrus (1: 2-4); second, the list in chap. 2; third, the Aramaic document, itself consisting of several papers connected by a nar-

rative (4: 8 to 6: 18). In the six chapters we have what purport to be six state papers—namely, the proclamation (1: 2-4); the decree of Cyrus (6: 3-5); the letter to Artaxerxes (pseudo-Smerdis) and the reply (4: 9-16 and 17-22); the report to Darius and the reply (5: 6-17 and 6: 2-12). These six papers date themselves, even if we regard some of them as mere reports of the contents of their originals, rather than as copies. The Aramaic document as a whole, by using the first person in verse 4, apparently refers its own origin to some of the builders of Zerubbabel's time. In Neh. 7: 5 sqq., Nehemiah says of himself, "I found the

book of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and I found written therein ;" and with this preface he proceeds to cite, not merely the entire list of Ezra 2, but the narrative statements that follow, up to and including Ezra 8 : 1. W. J. B.

When the seventy years had expired the Babylonian empire had ceased, and Cyrus the Persian had become master of the many realms of which it had been composed, as well as of the more eastern empire of the Medes and Persians. In the very first year of his imperial reign, this king issued a decree distinctly recognizing these prophecies, acknowledging the authority by which they were given, and his obligation to act upon them. He accordingly permitted such as wished to return to their own country, and to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem ; allowing them also to collect funds from such as chose to remain behind, and with the promise of the royal protection and encouragement in the undertaking. Accordingly, a large caravan was formed of the more devout and zealous Jews, *as they now begin to be called*, who were liberally supplied with treasure from the bounty of those who, preferring to remain in the East, felt the more induced to evince their less adventurous zeal by the liberality of their contributions. The king also caused to be made over to them the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple. Their leader, who went with the appointment of governor of the colony, was the lineal representative of the house of David, being the grandson of Jeconiah, and is distinctly recognized by Cyrus as "the prince of the Jews." He was born in Babylon, and his name was Zerubbabel ; but, as appears to have been usual with the great men of Judah during the Captivity, he had another name—that of Sheshbazzar—by which he was known among the heathen. *Kitto*.

*Cyrus, king of Persia, moved by the Spirit of the Lord.* As the sending into captivity of Judah was God's act, so was their return from captivity. The relation of one to the other includes two memorable particulars, each of which conveys a great and instructive truth ; the first respects God's dealings with His people ; the second refers to His control of human agencies as connected with those dealings. The Captivity was the culmination of a long protracted series of chastisements which God had sent upon His people for their repeated and aggravated iniquities ; signally, for their idolatry. For centuries this final supreme punishment had been threatened, but withheld gen-

eration after generation, through the marvelous patience and forbearance of God. Now that there had been wrought (Jer. 29, Ezek. 36 and Dan. 9) in the hearts of the captive people a real penitence and entire reformation from the practice and spirit of idolatry, God could interpose to fulfil His old promises of mercy and forgiveness. He could consistently provide for their deliverance from bondage and restoration to their land. The Return, therefore, like the Captivity, conveys the assurance of God's faithfulness to His word. As the latter made certain the word of *threatening*, the former makes sure the word of *promise*.

Another instructive fact, shown alike by the Captivity and the Return, respects God's preparation and use of human kings as His agents in the accomplishment of His purposes. In the particulars of the history of the two monarchs, Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, in the world-sweep of their conquests, in the vast changes among the leading nations and the transfers of the centre of world-dominion that were connected with these two marked careers, prophecy points directly to the purpose and the hand of God as the original and supreme actor. One, Nebuchadnezzar, is named (Jer. 25 : 9), with his work of *carrying away* ; the other, Cyrus, is named (Isa. 44 : 28 ; 45 : 1), together with his mission of *returning*, the people of God. *Here* the inspired historian (Ezra) asserts that "*Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus*" to execute this mission. B.

We learn especially from the prophetic Books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, that the Jews in their captivity had humbled themselves greatly before God, were confessing their sins and seeking His face with all their heart. In point as illustrating their moral and spiritual state, see Jer. 29 : 10-14, 30, 31 ; Ezek. 36 : 24-38 and 37 ; Dan. 9, and also Ps. 102 : 13-24. Inasmuch as the Captivity occurred at all only for moral reasons, the Lord having caused His people to go into this captivity only for their great sins, so there could be no restoration until their moral state was effectually changed ; till their hearts were turned from idols, broken in penitence and confession of sins, and lifted to God in prayer for mercy. On these conditions God had all along promised His pardon and favor. These conditions being in a good degree fulfilled, He returned to His people in mercy, their captive chains were broken, and they were free to return to their land. H. C.

The edict of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the Temple was, in fact, the beginning of Juda-

ism ; and the great changes by which the nation was transformed into a Church are clearly marked. 1. The lesson of the kingdom was completed by the Captivity. The sway of a temporal prince was at length left to be at best only a faint image of the Messianic kingdom to which the prophets pointed. The royal power had led to apostasy in Israel, and to idolatry in Judah ; and men looked for some other outward form in which the law might be visibly realized. Dependence on Persia excluded the hope of absolute political freedom, and offered a sure guaranty for the liberty of religious organizations. 2. The Captivity, which was the punishment of idolatry, was also the limit of that sin. Thenceforth the Jews apprehended fully the spiritual nature of their faith, and held it fast through persecution. At the same time wider views were opened to them of the unseen world. The powers of good and evil were recognized in their action in the material world ; and in this way some preparation was made for the crowning doctrine of Christianity. 3. The organization of the outward Church was connected with the purifying of doctrine, and served as the form in which the truth might be realized by the mass. Prayer, public and private, assumed a new importance. The prophetic work came to an end. The law was "fenced" by an oral tradition. Synagogues were erected and schools formed. Scribes shared the respect of priests, if they did not supersede them in popular regard. 4. Above all, the bond by which the people of God were held together was at length felt to be religious and not local, nor even primarily national. The Jews were incorporated in different nations, and still looked to Jerusalem as the centre of their faith. The boundaries of Canaan were passed, and the beginnings of a spiritual dispensation were already made, when the "dispersion" was established among the kingdoms of the earth. *Bp. Westcott.*

The supremacy exercised by Babylon over the Jewish nation from the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (b.c. 586) to the destruction of the Babylonian Empire by Cyrus the Great (b.c. 538), passed on the capture of Babylon in that year to Persia, and the Achaemenian monarchs thenceforward for above two centuries controlled and directed the destinies of the Hebrew people. They inaugurated their rule by an act of extraordinary grace and favor. Cyrus had no sooner made himself master of Babylon than, in the very first year of his reign there, he issued a decree whereby this entire population, amounting to many tens of thou-

sands and possessed of considerable wealth, was permitted and exhorted to quit the land into which it had been forcibly transplanted some fifty, sixty, or seventy years earlier, and to transfer itself once more to its old and much-loved habitation. G. R.

*The attitude of Cyrus toward Jehovah.* According to the accounts in the Bible, Cyrus authorized five things for the Jews : First, the emigrating to Judea of such of Jehovah's people as chose (Ezra 1 : 3, 5) ; second, the building of the Temple, with specifications (1 : 2 ; 6 : 3, etc.) ; third, certain payments toward the expense from the public treasury (6 : 4 ; 3 : 7) ; fourth, the restoring of the Temple vessels (6 : 5 ; 1 : 7-11) ; fifth, contributions both for helping the emigrants and for the use of the Temple (1 : 4, 6). He did this expressly in recognition of a claim upon him by Jehovah, whom he recognizes as "the God of heaven," "the God of Israel," the God who has given him "all kingdoms," and, possibly, as pre-eminently "the God" (1 : 2, 8). To this Josephus adds that Cyrus knew of Isaiah's predicting him by name, and that Cyrus (like Darius afterward, Ezra 6 : 10) had sacrifices offered in Jerusalem for him and his family, with sundry additional details (*Ant.* XI., 1 : 1-3). These added statements are not particularly improbable, but they have no such basis of evidence as the statements in Ezra. W. J. B.

There are four decrees given by the kings of Persia in favor of the Jews : The first by Cyrus (Ezra 1 : 1) ; the second by Darius (Ezra 6 : 8) ; the third by Artaxerxes, in the seventh year of his reign (Ezra 7 : 11) ; the fourth by the same Artaxerxes to Nehemiah (chap. 2), in the twentieth year of his reign. *Bp. Wilson.*

**Ezra 1 : 1-4. 2 Chron. 36 : 22, 23.**

*The decree of Cyrus.* The origin of the Return is found in an exertion of Divine influence on the mind of a heathen king, who was moved thereby to put forth a proclamation or decree, addressed to all the people of the Lord God of Israel dwelling in any part of his dominions, granting them free permission to return to their own land, and at the same time recommending his other subjects to expedite their departure by giving them out of their abundance gold, silver, goods and cattle, so that none should be hindered by poverty from taking advantage of the king's kindness. Many things are remarkable in this decree : (1) Its promulgation by a heathen king, spontaneously as it would seem ; (2) its recognition of a single supreme God, "the Lord God of heaven ;" (3) its declaration that the supreme God had "charged" the king



to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem ; and (4) its actual origination in a "stir" of the king's spirit by God Himself. The secret government of the world by Jehovah is, in part, opened to us, and we see how great political events, anteriorly improbable, are brought about by His action on men's hearts ; we see that He does not leave, has never left, the heathen wholly to themselves, but condescends to put thoughts into their minds, and bend their wills, and so bring about his purposes.

**1. In the first year of Cyrus.** The context shows that it is the first year of Cyrus at Babylon which is intended. Cyrus the Great became king of Persia by his final defeat and capture of Astyages, in B.C. 559 probably. His conquest of Babylon was, comparatively speaking, late in his reign, and is fixed by the canon of Ptolemy to B.C. 538. He took the city on the night of Belshazzar's feast (Dan. 5 : 30), when Daniel had just been appointed to the third place in the kingdom (*ibid.*, verse 29), and was practically at the head of affairs. Thus the great king and the great prophet of the time were brought into contact, and naturally conferred together, as may be gathered from Josephus. P. C.

**Significant Phrases :** **The first year of Cyrus.** Cyrus had at least three first years—as king of Persia, perhaps 559 B.C. ; as king of the Medes and Persians, about 550 B.C. ; and as successor to Nabonidus in Babylon, 538 B.C. The date now received as the first year of Cyrus is 538 B.C. **By the mouth of Jeremiah.** The promise of restoration after seventy years (Jer. 29 : 10 ; cf. 2 Chron. 36 : 21) is here especially referred to. Nebuchadnezzar deported Daniel and his companions 605 B.C. (Dan. 1 : 1). This was sixty-eight years, counting inclusively, before 538 B.C. **Made a proclamation** (Heb., "caused a voice to pass"). The order was proclaimed, from place to place, by public criers, as well as put in written form. **All his kingdom.** This implies that the Jews were now, as half a century later in the time of Esther, living in every part of the empire governed by Cyrus. W. J. B.

It is said that God "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus" to issue this decree ; we may conclude He did this by the wise counsel of Daniel ; first, to fulfil the prophecy of Jeremiah (25 : 11), this being the year of the expiration of the Captivity, which Daniel had computed before (Dan. 9 : 2) ; and, secondly, to fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah respecting the rebuilding of the Temple (44 : 28), to which Cyrus, in his decree, mani-

festly alludes. *Hales.*—The Divine predictions and descriptions (Isa. 41 : 44–46) refer, probably, more to the work and mission than to the person of Cyrus. It is not any depreciation of the Divine character of these prophecies, nor yet of the Divine agency in their fulfilment, if we reverently trace the *nexus* of natural and reasonable causes through which all was accomplished ; for we mostly descry the hand of God, not in sudden interferences, but in the conjunction of events, each following the other in natural order, but all contributing to an issue which, if viewed by itself, would appear supernatural, even irrespective of its prediction. Thus is miracle ever highest providence, and high providence ever miracle, for heaven and earth are not far, and Jehovah is the living God. A. E.

Isaiah describes with remarkable accuracy the personal character of Cyrus. His warlike spirit, his towering ambition, the rapidity of his conquests, the equity of his administration, and his heathen religion are all declared after the manner of prophecy. The significance of the prophecy deepens when it comes to describe the conquests achieved by Cyrus. History but repeats these prophecies in describing the facts as they occurred. Isaiah explicitly foretells the restoration of Judah from captivity and the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem through the agency of Cyrus. *Phelps.*—The last twenty chapters of Isaiah associate the name of Cyrus and his advent to sovereignty with the sublimest Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. The king of Persia is hailed as the herald of a new era, girded for his task by the hand of Jehovah, and raised up for Israel's deliverance. And in the biographical sketch of Daniel's life the account of his activity and elevation closes with the sentence, "And Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus." Not that Daniel died then, for the tenth chapter describes a prophetic vision granted him in the third year of the Persian king's reign ; but that this tried and aged servant of God was permitted to see the great day on which the prophetic hopes of the nation had been fixed. *Behrends.*

Daniel was still alive in the first and third years of Cyrus (Dan. 1 : 21 ; 10 : 1), and was especially interested in the fact that the seventy years of Jeremiah were coming to an end (Dan. 9 : 2 sqq.). Further, the Darius the Mede of the Book of Daniel is, necessarily, either Cyrus himself, or a colleague of his of some sort. It follows that Daniel was powerful at court when the proclamation was made. It is impos-

sible to avoid the conclusion that Daniel must have been the leading spirit in bringing about the return from the Exile. And really the account given in Ezra needs to be complemented by just such facts as the Book of Daniel gives us. The movement for the Return was well planned, and strongly carried out in the face of rugged difficulties; most of the later movements were weak and vacillating. With such a Cyrus as appears in the Cyrus writings, with Zerubbabel and Jeshua so weak and lacking in leadership as they later appear to be, with such a people as the returning Jews evidently were, how can this movement be accounted for unless there was some great leader not mentioned in Ezra? Apparently there was such a leader in the person of Daniel; and apparently the state of chronic weakness into which the movement sank after two or three years was due to the loss of his counsels. W. J. B.

Jewish tradition holds that Daniel, occupying a high position in the court of Cyrus, brought to his attention the prophecies of Isaiah, which even name Cyrus as God's servant (Isa. 44 : 26-28, and 45 : 1-4). There is no good reason to question this Jewish tradition. We know that Daniel stood high at the court of Cyrus; had ready access to his ear; was familiar with Hebrew prophecy; was aware that God's time for the restoration had come, and was laboring and praying for this result. In fact, Daniel was raised up of God for this emergency as truly as Cyrus. The men whom God makes for a great emergency always come, to time and do their duty. The Jewish tradition adequately accounts for facts otherwise not easily if even possibly accounted for. Hence this imperial summons to all who recognized themselves as God's people—"Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up," etc. Wherever a Jew is found sojourning among us (Ezra 1 : 3, 4), let his neighbors aid him with silver, gold, goods and beasts of burden, etc., and let that Temple be rebuilt. H. C.

2. It is a large assumption which appears in his decree—"Jehovah the God of heaven hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah;" but it is not out of harmony with what we know of his character. The noblest epithets are heaped upon him in the prophecy of Isaiah. He is "the anointed, the Messiah, of Jehovah." God "saith of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure." He is "the righteous man" whom God "raised up from the East." Contrast this with the scorn of Egypt as an ally

(Isa. 30, 31), and the denunciation of the pride of Assyria, and the prophecy of its doom (Isa. 10). And heathen writings illustrate the Scripture representation of him. *Mackennal*.

**The Lord, the God of heaven.** Two things are specially remarkable in this passage—the strongly marked religious character, very unusual in heathen documents, and the distinctness with which it asserts the unity of God, and thence identifies the God of the Persians with the God of the Jews. Both these points receive abundant illustration from the Persian cuneiform inscriptions, in which the recognition of a single supreme God, Ormuzd, and the clear and constant ascription to him of the direction of all mundane affairs, are leading features. G. R.

3. This address extends to *all the tribes*. The *Ten Tribes* in Gozan and Media were also within the dominions of Cyrus. 1 Chron. 9 : 3 intimates that many from those tribes returned at this and other periods. All who would were invited to return. And all peoples among whom the tribes of Israel were scattered received the king's charge to aid the proposed colonists with gold and goods and cattle. B.

5. In verse 5 the returning exiles are spoken of as of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi; but this is not inconsistent with the representation, steadily made in the Scriptures, that representatives from northern Israel were included in the new Jewish state (see Ezek. 37 : 16-28; Ezek. 48; Acts 26 : 7; Luke 2 : 36; and the numerous passages in Jeremiah or the later books where Israel or Ephraim or Joseph are spoken of). W. J. B.

**All whose spirit God had stirred up to go.** As the Captivity lengthened itself out, as month succeeded to month and year to year, without sacrifice, without public gatherings to a common religious centre, without high festival times, without stirring calls to common action, it is no wonder if, as seems to have been the case, religion decayed, the general tendency was downward, and the bulk of the people sank into lukewarmness and indifference. A striking indication of this appears in the general coldness with which the decree of Cyrus authorizing the exiles to return to the land of their fathers was received by the community. A free permission to return had been given to all, but only a portion availed themselves of it (Ezra 7 : 7; 8 : 1-14). Even these required to have their spirits specially "stirred up by God" (Hag. 1 : 14) before they could bring themselves to make the venture. G. R.

7. The nations who had borne the yoke of

slavery in Babylonia along with the Jews, when allowed to leave the land of their captivity, took back with them their native gods. The Jews alone had no images to take; the bitter lesson of the Exile had at last eradicated idolatry from the hearts of all those at any rate who were ready to avail themselves of the permission to return. What they carried with them, therefore, were only "the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his god." *Sayce.*

**8. Sheshbazzar.** The Babylonish name of Zerubbabel, which is found by comparing Ezra 5 : 16 with Zech. 4 : 9. It was common, during the Captivity, for the principal Jews to bear two names, the one Jewish, the other Babylonian. Daniel was thus called Belteshazzar, and Hananiah, Mishael; and Azariah received the names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Dan. 1 : 7). *Bp. Patrick.*

**11.** The direct distance from Babylon to Jerusalem is about five hundred and twenty miles. But this large caravan must have taken a far more circuitous and easier route, by Carchemish and the valley of the Orontes, which would increase the journey to about nine hundred miles. We know that it occupied Ezra and his companions four months (Ezra 7 : 8, 9), and it must have taken considerably longer when Zerubbabel and his followers wended their way to the land of their fathers. Probably we are not wrong in supposing that the journey was begun on the first day of the first month of the year 537, and that their destination was not reached till close on that seventh month which saw the small remnant gathered in Jerusalem for the first and most necessary work of the restoration of the altar, which was followed by the celebration of the Feast of the Tabernacles (Ezra 3). *A. E.*

There only remained for the new-comers the small, central strip of the country round Jerusalem occupied by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. From these two tribes the larger part of the exiles were descendants, and to this, their ancient home, they returned. Henceforth the name of Judah took the predominant place in the national titles. As the primitive name of "Hebrew" had given way to the historical name of Israel, so that of Israel now gave way to the name of *Judean* or *Jew*, so full of praise and pride, of reproach and scorn. "It was born," as their later historian truly observes, "on the day when they came out from Babylon," and their history thenceforth is the history not of Israel, but of Judaism. *Stanley.*

**2 : 1-64.** *The number of those who returned from captivity with Zerubbabel, and the names of the chiefs.* The list may be divided into ten parts :

1. Enumeration of the leaders (verse 2).
2. Numbers of those who returned, arranged according to families (verses 3-19).
3. Numbers of those who returned, arranged according to localities (verses 20-35).
4. Numbers of the priests, arranged according to families (verses 36-39).
5. Numbers of the Levites, arranged similarly (verses 40-42).
6. Families of the Nethinim (verses 43-54).
7. Families of "Solomon's servants" (verses 55-57).
8. Number of these last two classes together (verse 58).
9. Account of those who could not show their genealogy (verses 59-63).
10. General summation (verse 64). *P. C.*

**2. Which came with Zerubbabel.**

Two other copies of this list have come down to us, one in Neh. 7 : 7-69, the other in 1 Esd. 5 : 8-43. All seem to have been taken from the same original document, and to have suffered more or less from corruption. Where two out of the three agree, the reading should prevail over that of the third. *B. C.*

**36. The priests.** It hence appears that of the twenty-four courses of the priests that were carried away to Babylon, only four returned, making a number of about 4289 persons; the rest being either extinct or staying behind. But of these four which now returned, each subdivided themselves in such a manner that the twenty-four courses were made up again, and retained the same titles which were held before. *Prideaux.*

**63. The Tirshatha—i.e., Zerubbabel,** who is called "governor" (*pechah*) in chap. 5 : 14, and "governor of Judah" frequently by Haggai (1 : 1, 14; 2 : 2, etc.). The word "tirshatha" is probably old Persian, though it does not occur in the cuneiform inscriptions. *B. C.*

**64.** By far the greater number, and especially those of the wealthier classes, preferred to remain behind, to hold the property which they had acquired, and pursue the avocations to which they were accustomed on a foreign but now friendly soil. It has been calculated that those who returned stood to those who stayed behind in the proportion of one to six; but, however this may have been, it is quite certain that the edict of Cyrus took but a very partial effect, and that both at Babylon and elsewhere

in the Persian dominions, as especially at Susa (Esth. 9 : 5-18), there remained, during the whole of the Persian period, very large and flourishing communities of Jews, who, as a general rule, were content with their position, and made no effort to remove to Palestine. G. R.

**65-67.** *The number of the slaves, horses, mules, camels and asses of those who returned.* This enumeration is not altogether without an historical value, since it is indicative of the general poverty and low estate of the returning exiles, who had but one slave and one ass to every six of their number, one horse to every sixty, one camel to every hundred, and one mule to every one hundred and seventy-five. P. C.

The largest, the wealthiest and the noblest portion of the nation, therefore, took no part in the movement, except by their sympathies and by their bountiful contributions in furtherance of the object ; and it has ever been the sentiment of the Jews that the most illustrious part of their nation voluntarily remained in the land of their exile. Those who did go were such as were animated by stronger desires to behold and possess once more their father's land, and to restore the Lord's house in Jerusalem, and such as were less attached by prosperity and family ties to the land of their sojourning. That the great body of them were of the poorer sort is shown, among other circumstances, by the fact that, although there were 42,360 Jews who returned, they had but 7337 male and female servants among them ; and still more by the circumstance that the long and perilous journey across the desert was performed by the greater part of them on foot ; that of those who did ride, the far greater part were on asses, animals never now employed on such journeys ; and that, indeed, the whole number of animals could scarcely have been sufficient for the women and children, even on a low computation. It is probable, however, that, although those who had families took them, as they had no intention of returning, a very considerable portion of those who did go were unmarried ; a fact which explains their readiness in contracting marriages soon after their arrival with the women of the neighboring heathen. There were but 435 camels, the animals best suited for the journey, and not more than 786 horses. These, we suppose, were ridden by persons of condition, and the camels by their families. Of mules, then a more favorite animal than now, there were but 245, while the asses were 6720 ; in all, little more than 8000 animals for not fewer than 50,000 persons, including servants. *Kitto.*

**68-70.** *The offerings made by the returned exiles on their arrival at Jerusalem.* The long journey of the exiles from Babylonia to Jerusalem involved considerable risk, and its successful termination naturally called forth their gratitude. The character of the offerings made is indicative of the fact, otherwise probable, that the exiles had turned all that they possessed into money, and had brought to Jerusalem a considerable amount of coin. P. C.

**70. All Israel.** That Israelites of the Ten Tribes returned to Palestine with Zerubbabel is apparent, (1) from the statement in 1 Chron. 9 : 3 ; (2) from the enumeration of *twelve* chiefs (Neh. 7 : 7 ; 1 Esd. 5 : 8) ; and (3) from various expressions in Ezra (see 2 : 2, 59 ; 3 : 1, etc.). B. C.

*Religious Bearings.* Any number of "points" can be found here. But you get the best point of all if you reach a clear view of the history itself, and see in it God's providential care over His people, and over His purposes of mercy to mankind through them. He so arranged it that even the great disasters that had befallen them had befallen them as the punishment of their sins, yet served to open for them wider destinies. He brought some of them back to Jerusalem to attend to that part of His plan that was there to be wrought out ; and he left others among the nations, to be the medium of contact between the nations and the mercies prepared for them. W. J. B.

Cyrus was God's instrument, and the statesman's insight was the result of God's illumination. The Divine causality moves men when they move themselves. It was not only in the history of the chosen people that God's purpose is wrought out by more or less conscious and willing instruments. The principle laid down by the writer of this book is of universal application, and the true "philosophy of history" must recognize as underlying all other so-called causes and forces the one uncaused Cause, of whose purposes kings and politicians are the executants, even while they freely act according to their own judgments, and, it may be, in utter unconsciousness of Him. It concerns our tranquillity and hopefulness, in the contemplation of the bewildering maze and often heart-breaking tragedy of mundane affairs, to hold fast by the conviction that God's unseen hand moves the pieces on the board, and presides over all the complications. The difference between "sacred" and "profane" history is not that one is under His direct con-

trol, and the other is not. What was true of Cyrus and his policy is as true of America or England. Would that politicians and all men recognized the fact as clearly as this historian did! A. M.

When Cyrus was moving his armies toward Babylon he little knew that he was accomplishing the Divine purpose for the humbling of the oppressor and the deliverance of His oppressed people. And, in all the events of common life, men seem to be so completely their own masters, there seems such a want of any influence from without, that God is liable to slip entirely out of sight. And yet God is really at work. Whether men know it or not, they are really fulfilling the purposes of His will. Calmly but steadily, like the stars in the silent heavens, men are bringing to pass the schemes of God. His wildest enemies are really helping to swell His triumphs. Oh, how vain is the attempt to resist His mighty hand! The day cometh when all the tokens of confusion and defeat shall disappear, when the bearing even of the fall of a sparrow on the plans of God shall be made apparent, and every intelligent creature in earth and heaven shall join in the mighty shout—"Alleluiah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." W. G. B.

It is easier to live among the low levels of the plain of Babylon than to take to the dangers and privations of the weary tramp across the desert. The ruins of Jerusalem are a much less comfortable abode than the well-furnished houses which have to be left. Prudence says, Be content where you are, and let other people take the trouble of such mad schemes as rebuilding the Temple. A thousand excuses sing in our ears, and we let the moment in which alone some noble resolve is possible slide past

us, and the rest of life is empty of another such. Neglected opportunities, unobeyed calls to high deeds, we all have in our lives. The saddest of all words is, We might have been. How much wiser, happier, nobler, were the daring souls that rose to the occasion, and flung ease and wealth and companionship behind them, because they heard the Divine command couched in the royal permission, and humbly answered, "Here am I; send me!" A. M.

The human spirit is stirred alone by the Spirit of God to all its good, whether of thought, desire or execution. And the motion of the Divine Spirit is in such connection with Truth or Providence that the human spirit is conscious of no exerted control, scarcely even of guidance. The effect of high and holy desire or purpose, and of devout Christian action, is the first and only intimation that a Divine influence *has been* exerted upon the soul.

The utter giving up of idolatry by the Jews during the Captivity wrought a double good. It was a testimony *against idolatry*. It was an impressive disclosure of the true and only living God. It rooted out the wrong, while it planted the right thought of God, in His nature and worship.

The principles of God's dealing with His ancient people are still applied to every nation favored with the great gifts of His word and Spirit. Still He visits with chastisement the marked iniquities of such nations; and still He withdraws His chastening upon the penitent confession of those among them who own and regard His covenant of mercy.

God still overwatches and overrules all great events and changes among the nations in the interest of His people, and for the extension of His kingdom on the earth. B.

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## Section 54.

### ALTAR AND SACRIFICE RESTORED. FOUNDATION OF TEMPLE-WORK SUSPENDED.

EZRA 3 : 1-13 ; 4 : 1-24.

**3** : 1 AND when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, **2** the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is **3** written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon its base; for fear was upon them because of the people of the countries: and they offered burnt offerings

4 thereon unto the LORD, even burnt offerings morning and evening. And they kept the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the ordinance, as the duty of every day required; and afterward the continual burnt offering, and the offerings of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the LORD. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD: but the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, unto Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the rest of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to have the oversight of the work of the house of the LORD. Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to have the oversight of the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the order of David king of Israel. And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

4:1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded a temple unto the LORD, the God of Israel; then they drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of fathers' houses, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assyria, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of fathers' houses of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD, the God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of his companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian character, and set forth in the Syrian tongue. Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort: then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, and the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Shushanchites, the Dehaites, the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Osnappar brought over, and set in the city of Samaria, and in the rest of the country beyond the river, and so forth. This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men beyond the river, and so forth. Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee are come to us unto Jerusalem; they are building the rebellious and the bad city, and have finished the walls, and repaired the foundations. Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls finished, they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll, and in the end it will endamage the kings. Now because we eat the salt of the palace, and it is not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king; that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time; for which cause was this city laid waste. We certify the king that, if this city be builded, and the walls finished, by this means thou shalt have no portion beyond the river. Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and in the rest of the country beyond the river, Peace, and so forth. The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me. And I decreed, and search hath been made, and it is found that this

city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have  
 20 been made therein. There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled  
 over all *the country* beyond the river; and tribute, custom, and toll, was paid unto them.  
 21 Make ye now a decree to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until a  
 22 decree shall be made by me. And take heed that ye be not slack herein: why should  
 23 damage grow to the hurt of the kings? Then when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was  
 read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went in haste to  
 24 Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the  
 work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem; and it ceased unto the second year of the  
 reign of Darius king of Persia.

**3: 1-4.** Before the rebuilding of the Temple itself was set about, in the second year after the Return, in the seventh month of the first year, at the general assembly for Divine service, the altar for the burnt offering was re-erected, in order to offer thereon the daily morning and evening sacrifice. The Feast of Tabernacles also was reinstated. The returned captives acted wisely in so doing. The worship of God Himself, and the obtaining of His blessing thereby, are the chief matter. Besides, the Feast of Tabernacles was especially a joyful solemnity, the cheerfulness of which took its peculiar character from the new, earnest task which the people had then in hand. C. G. B. —The site was the old one, where the first Temple had stood. Gathering at Jerusalem, probably at the end of the sixth month (end of August or beginning of September), the first and in some sense the most important part of the work was accomplished on the first day of the seventh month. The ruins and rubbish having been cleared away, the altar of burnt offering was once more reared on the old foundations (Ezra 3:3). Thenceforward the daily morning and evening and the festive sacrifices were duly and regularly offered. A. E.

**1. The seventh month.** It was still the first year of Cyrus; for it was before the founding of the Temple, the second month of his second year (verses 6, 8). It follows that the proclamation of Cyrus must have been issued early in the year, and then the start for Judea very promptly made. This has no force against the view that the biblical first year of Cyrus is 538 B.C.; for Cyrus had been on the throne at Babylon several months of the year preceding his "first year," so that there was time enough for all these transactions. **In the cities.** Doubtless the cities they occupied were largely those named in the list in chap. 2. As the land had been lying desolate, the cities must have been in an uninhabited and ruinous condition. But it would not take long for the settlers who went to each city to establish dwellings of some sort. W. J. B.

**The people gathered themselves together as one man.** Work to be well

done must be done by one man, or as if it were done by one man. Whether there be one man or many men, there must be one heart and one mind to the work in hand, or that work will not go forward as it ought to. There is no safety in divided counsels, in disagreement in action. All must come together in opinion, and finally act together—as one man. This is as true now as in the days of Ezra. H. C. T.

**2. Jeshua the son of Jozadak.** Jeshua was now high-priest (Hag. 1:1; Zech. 3:1). He was the son of Jehozadak, Jozadak, or Josedech, who was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar (1 Chron. 6:15). **Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel.** Zerubbabel was really the son of Pedaiah, Shealtiel's (or Salathiel's) younger brother. But Shealtiel having no sons, and the royal line being continued in the person of his nephew, Zerubbabel, the latter was accounted Shealtiel's son. B. C. —Jeshua, or Joshua, and Zerubbabel. In verse 2 the ecclesiastical dignity comes first, but in verse 8 the civil. Similarly, in Ezra 2:2 Zerubbabel precedes Jeshua. In Haggai, the priest is pre-eminent; in Zechariah, the prince. The truth seems to be that each was supreme in his own department, and that they understood each other cordially, or, Zechariah says, "the counsel of peace" was "between them both." A. M.

*Zerubbabel and the "Book of Moses," verses 2, 4.*

Did Zerubbabel promulgate, as binding upon the nation, all the multitudinous precepts constituting "the Mosaic laws," which occupy eleven chapters of Exodus, and almost the whole of Leviticus and Numbers? It is maintained that he did not. It is maintained, indeed, that the greater part of these precepts, of these books, was not yet in existence. The Babylonian priests, we are told, and especially Ezra, composed them in Babylon, between the time of Zerubbabel's departure and Ezra's arrival in Palestine. But then, we ask, what is meant by the statement that Zerubbabel "builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God" (Ezra 3:2)—what,

again, by the declaration, that "they kept the Feast of Tabernacles, *as it is written*, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required" (*ibid.*, verse 4)? What is this but an allusion to Num. 28:11-15, and a statement that Zerubbabel followed exactly the directions therein contained? Further, what is meant by the assertion, that "they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem, *as it is written in the Book of Moses?*" Does not this allude to Num. 8:9-15? Clearly we are intended to understand that Zerubbabel guided himself in religious matters by a "book," a book which he regarded as containing "the law of Moses"—and this book comprised directions which are only found in Numbers. But this is exactly the part of the law which it is said was not yet written. Thus Kuenen's view contradicts at least two passages of Ezra, and is consequently untenable. We must regard Zerubbabel as in possession of a book of the law, which certainly comprised Numbers, and if so, probably all the "priestly ordinances;" and which therefore probably was the Pentateuch. G. R.

**5, 6.** *Permanent establishment of the daily sacrifice, the set feasts, and the offering of free-will offerings.* Having set up the altar and celebrated the particular festival which the revolving year happened to have brought round, and which it would have been wrong to neglect, the exiles re-established permanently three things—(1) the daily sacrifice; (2) the celebration of the new moons and other regular feasts; and (3) the practice of allowing the people to bring offerings whenever they pleased, to be offered on the great altar by the priest or priests in attendance. The first of these was for atonement; the second for public thanksgiving and acknowledgment of God's mercies; the third for private devotion, the payment of vows and the like. P. C.

**5. Every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord.** What a man gives under pressure of fear, or of desire for popular applause, or in the hope of return, cannot fairly be set to his charity account. He deserves no credit for its giving. It may, indeed, help forward Temple-building, or mission work, or aid in paying church expenses; it may clothe the naked, or feed the hungry, or shelter the homeless; but no thanks to him for that. He would have held back the money if he had dared to. What the Lord wants is a freewill offering willingly offered.

Unless a man can give that, his giving is no giving. "God loveth a cheerful giver." No other giver has any smile of approval from Him. H. C. T.

*Principles of Giving.* We may find seven principles laid down in Scripture: 1. The willing mind. 2. The covenant with God as the basis (Ps. 50). 3. The altar sanctifying the gift. 4. Giving as unto the Lord—not men. 5. Self-denial as the measure of gifts. 6. Stewardship—all inalienably the Lord's. 7. Prayer and privilege. *Pieron.*

God guides the willing-hearted as with His eye. They are co-workers with Him in all the affairs of His kingdom. To some extent they see what He sees, and feel what He feels. They give liberally, and grudge not when they give. They covet earnestly, each generation of them, to be doing something for Him in their day. They have a faith that they can do anything if He commands it. The very *living substance* of things hoped for is already *in them*. And the *evidence* of things as large as kingdoms, and that lie beyond sight, is *of them*, just as sight itself is of the person that sees, and faith itself is identical with the person that believes, and hope is of the person that hopes. The kingdom of God, and even God Himself in His kingdom, lies pictured in the heart of all the heirs of eternal life. They covet earnestly to be doing something in their day for Him, the great Being in whom their forefathers trusted. All God's service, in all its kinds and in all its ages and dispensations, is a work of faith and a labor of love. *A. D. Pollock.*

**6. From the first day.** The altar was built and the daily sacrifice restored on the *first* day of the seventh month. The Feast of Tabernacles was not kept till the *fifteenth* day (Lev. 23:34). B. C.

**7. Preparation of materials for the rebuilding of the Temple.** When the restoration of religion had progressed thus far, the civil and ecclesiastical rulers turned their attention to that object which had been specially mentioned in the "decree of Cyrus" (chap. 1:2, 3), the rebuilding of the Temple. And first of all, it was necessary to collect building materials, wood and stone, which were the chief materials of the first Temple, and which Cyrus had particularized in a supplementary decree (chap. 6:4) as those to be employed in the construction of the second. P. C.

**They gave money.** It was necessary to prepare materials for the construction of the Temple first of all. Masons, therefore, were at once set to work to cut stone, and carpenters to



hew timber. Arrangements were entered into with the Tyrians and Sidonians, by which, in return for supplies of food, they were to furnish cedar-wood from Lebanon to their neighbors. B. C.—The cedars of Lebanon were once more, by royal permission, cut down in the northern mountains, and conveyed by the Phœnician navigators along their coast to Joppa, whence Zerubbabel's workmen transported them to Jerusalem. In the short space of seven months—from the seventh month of the first year, or that of the Return (3 : 1), to the second month of the second year (verse 8), or that which followed—sufficient material was collected for the work to begin. Then, on a set day, the foundations of the second Temple were laid, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem took part in the ceremony. G. R.

**8-13.** *Laying of the foundation of the Temple and ceremonial on the occasion.* Seven months were occupied with preparations. The winter was past, and the spring had arrived. It was the second month, Zif, the month of "blossom" corresponding to our May—the same month in which Solomon had laid the foundation of the first Temple (1 K. 6 : 1)—when Zerubbabel judged that the time had come for commencing the foundation of the second. The correspondence of the month was no doubt intentional, like the correspondence of the foundations of the altar (verse 3), and was to mark that all was to be as before, that nothing was to be wantonly changed. Zerubbabel and Jeshua presided ; but to Zerubbabel is assigned the chief part of the work. "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house" are the words of God Himself to Zechariah (Zech. 4 : 9). It was arranged that the work should commence with a religious ceremonial, natural piety here suggesting what was not recorded of the "first house," though it may have occurred and not have been put on record. The ceremonial consisted chiefly of praise, and was accompanied with sacred music, according to the pattern set by David and Solomon in their sacred processions and ceremonies (1 Chron. 15 : 19, 24 ; 16 : 5 ; 2 Chron. 5 : 12, etc.). Their special parts in it were assigned beforehand to the priests, the Levites and the people. P. C.

It must have been a happy and a bright spring day in the month Iyar of the year 535 B.C., when the company of returned exiles gathered around Zerubbabel and Jeshua to see the foundations of their glorious Temple once more laid. And yet we scarcely wonder that the sound of weeping should have mingled with the song of

psalms and the music of praise (Ezra 3 : 8-13). It had come, as foretold to the fathers ; and they, the younger generation, who had not known the glories of the first Temple, merely the bitterness and reproach of the Exile, could only feel as if once more the old, divinely restored, were to cast the brightness of its glory over the future of Israel. But there were others in that assembly to whom these foundations recalled the past in its contrast with the present. It was not only what had been, but what now was ; not only that they had seen "this house in her first glory," but that what they now took in hand must have been in their "eyes in comparison of it as nothing" (Hag. 2 : 3). Nor was it only "a day of small things." The dullest eye must have perceived the difficulties by which their undertaking was surrounded, and which, humanly speaking, must have made it appear most unlikely of realization. The political, as well as the religious, prospect before that small remnant was indeed of the darkest. It seemed as if there were a "great mountain before Zerubbabel." How could it be made "a plain"? Assuredly "not by might, nor by power"—which were not theirs—but if ever, or at all, only by the Spirit of the Lord (Zech. 4 : 6, 7). A. E.

**8.** The language is remarkable. It is not "coming to Jerusalem," nor "coming to the land of Israel," but "coming unto the house of God," which was the real object of their desire and hope. It was their longing for the house of God and His worship, and the consequent sense of His presence and favor, which drew them to Jerusalem to rebuild its ruins. W. H. G.

**9.** *The services when the foundation was laid.* The account of these is very graphic. It can hardly be made more so by analysis or explanations. The best way to understand it is to read it several times, fixing attention upon it clause by clause, until in imagination you see and hear the gathered multitudes, the robed priests with their trumpets, the trained Levite musicians, the responsive singing, the great shout, the mingled weeping and rejoicing. Then think of the reasons for weeping and for rejoicing that were in their minds. Those who wept were not weeping merely because the new Temple was so inferior to the old. Along with this was the thought of miseries and disappointments and humiliations passed through since the old house stood in its glory. And the joy of those who rejoiced was that which comes from the realizing of hopes long delayed, that have often almost yielded to despair. W. J. B.

11. The ancient strain which still rings from Christian lips, and bids fair to be as eternal as the mercies which it hymns, rose with strange pathos from the lips of the crowd on the desolate temple mountain, ringed about by the waste solitudes of the city. "For He is good, for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel." It needed some faith to sing that song then, even with the glow of return upon them. What of all the weary years? What of the empty homesteads and the surrounding enemies and the brethren still in Babylon? No doubt some, at least, of the rejoicing multitude had learned what the Captivity was meant to teach and had come to bless God, both for the long years of exile, which had burned away much dross, and for the incomplete work of restoration, surrounded though they were with foes and little as was their strength to fight. The trustful heart finds occasion for unmingled praise in the most mingled cup of joy and sorrow. A. M.

12. **Had seen the first house.** It was now just about fifty years since the destruction of Solomon's Temple, so that there were yet alive a good many people old enough to remember it distinctly. A few might remember back as far as the times of Josiah.

*Their outlook backward and forward.* The account makes much of the connection between the returning exiles and Moses. It specifies that they did according to what is "written in the law of Moses" (verse 2). As we have seen, the Pentateuchal sacred year is recognized in nearly all its particulars. So are burnt offerings and freewill offerings, in their distinctive character, and the distinction between priest and Levite, and the Levitical age of service "from twenty years old and upward." The ecclesiastical head of the returning exiles is Jeshua, the high-priest, of Aaronic descent. It is hardly open to dispute that the writer of this narrative represents that the Levitical law as a whole was in existence in Zerubbabel's time, and was regarded as from Moses. Even those scholars who hold that the Levitical law dates from some decades later than Zerubbabel would not claim that this writer agrees with them. Again, the looking back to David's time is hardly less marked than the looking back to Moses. The musical part of the service, which is the most prominent part, is marked with the names of David and Asaph. The Temple and altar themselves are in succession with those that David planned and Solomon built. Their civil leader is Zerubbabel, grandson of the king of Judah who was carried

into exile, the living representative of the lineage of David. In all these particulars they were looking forward, as well as looking backward. The one thought most in the mind of those of them who were spiritually minded was the thought expressed in the song they sang, namely, that Jehovah's lovingkindness over Israel is to eternity. Thus far it had proved so. Israel was still in existence. Now again the unextinguishable fire burned on the altar. David's seed had its living representative. The promise to Israel and David would not fail for lack of a claimant. Jehovah had said that this lovingkindness of His should last forever. With a fidelity outlasting the tribulations of the Exile, He had kept His word. This was an earnest that He would always keep it, and all nations should yet be blessed in the seed of Abraham and of David. We are accustomed to look for Messianic forecasts in the prophetic books; but really there are no passages in the Old Testament where the Messianic hope and the Messianic promise are brighter than in historical situations like this. W. J. B.

**4:1.** *The adversaries of Judah and Benjamin.* The Samaritans—the people whom Shalmaneser and Esarhaddon, kings of Assyria, had brought from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, and other places, and had settled in parts of the country formerly inhabited by the Ten Tribes of Israel (see verses 2 and 10). They were called Samaritans, from having occupied the city of Samaria and its neighborhood, and were also called Cutheans, from the country which some of them had formerly inhabited. *Bp. Patrick.*

**2. Since the days.** Esarhaddon mounted the Assyrian throne in the year B.C. 681, and reigned till B.C. 668. Thus the Samaritans speak of what had taken place at least a hundred and thirty years previously. **Esarhaddon which brought us up.** There appear to have been at least three colonizations of Samaria by the Assyrian kings. Sargon, soon after his conquest, replaced the captives whom he had carried off by colonists from Babylon and from Hamath (2 K. 17:24). Later in his reign he added to these first settlers an Arabian element ("Ancient Monarchies," Vol. II., p. 415). Some thirty or forty years afterward Esarhaddon, his grandson, largely augmented the population by colonists drawn from various parts of the empire, but especially from the southeast, Susiana, Elymais and Persia (see below, verse 9). Thus the later Samaritans were an exceedingly mixed race.

**3. Ye have nothing to do with us.**

At first sight this rejection seems harsh. But the Samaritans had united idolatrous rites with the worship of Jehovah (2 K. 17 : 29-41); and to have allowed them a share in restoring the Temple would have been destructive of all purity of religion. B. C.—At the cost of turning these would-be friends into bitter and persistent enemies, “Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel” saved the nation, for the time at any rate, from the danger of having their religion corrupted and adulterated by intermixture with a form of belief and practice which was altogether of an inferior type, and to a considerable extent tainted with heathenism. G. R.

The Jews steadily rejected the proposal made by the Samaritans, to join with them in rebuilding the Temple of the God of Israel and celebrating His worship; and this rejection appears to have been subservient to the purposes of the Divine economy. The intermixture of the Samaritans with the Jews might have rendered the accomplishment of the prophecies concerning the family and birth of the Messiah less clear; might have introduced again idolatry among the restored Jews, now completely abhorrent from it, and in various ways defeated the grand objects of Providence in selecting and preserving a peculiar people. In consequence of this rejection and the alienation it produced, the Jews probably became more vigilant in preserving the strictness and the Samaritans more zealous in emulating the purity of the Mosaic ritual. They became hostile and therefore unsuspected guardians and vouchers of the integrity of the sacred text, particularly of the Pentateuch. And while the Jews in general, blinded by their national prejudices, could see in the promised Messiah only a national and temporal deliverer, the Samaritans appear to have judged of His pretensions with more justice and success. And though our Lord visited them only as it were incidentally, yet He was able to declare to them His character and avow his dignity, without that mysterious reserve and jealous caution, which the proneness of the Jewish multitude “to take Him by force and make Him a king,” constantly required. And it seems evident that the Samaritans were predisposed and prepared to receive and diffuse the light of the Gospel more than any other description of men, the pious and reflecting part of the Jewish nation only excepted. And thus this circumstance appears in its final result to have materially facilitated the diffusion of true religion in the

world, and thus to have been subservient to the general advantage of mankind. *Graves.*

**5. Hired counsellors—i.e.,** bribed officials at the Persian court to interpose delays and create difficulties, in order to hinder the work. **Until the reign of Darius.** (See below, verse 24.) It has been argued that the Darius intended is Darius Nothus, who ascended the Persian throne in B.C. 424, more than a century later than the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (B.C. 538). The order of the names in verses 5-7 and 24 is in favor of this view; but the fact that Zerubbabel and Jeshua, who came up from Babylon in the first year of Cyrus, are still living and vigorous in the second (chap. 5 : 2) and even in the sixth year of Darius (Zech. 4 : 9) makes it impossible that the king intended can be Darius the Second, since their age would be in his sixth year at least one hundred and fifty. This argument has induced all recent commentators to acquiesce in the hypothesis that the Darius of Ezra is Darius the son of Hystaspes.

**6. In the reign of Ahasuerus.** If the Darius of verses 5 and 24 is Darius Hystaspes, the Ahasuerus of the present verse must be Cambyses, the son and successor of Cyrus. That Persian kings had often two names is a well-known fact of history.

**7. In the days of Artaxerxes.** By “Artaxerxes” in this place, Gomates, the pseudo-Smerdis, seems to be intended. He succeeded Cambyses in B.C. 521, and reigned seven months, when he was deposed and executed by Darius Hystaspes. B. C.

**17-24.** This stoppage of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and re-establishment of the Jews as a nation, by one of the early Persian kings, is the more remarkable, because, though similar attempts to check and thwart the Israelites were made by their adversaries in the reigns of all the other early kings, in every other case they failed; in this case only were they successful. No king forbade the building but the second monarch after Cyrus. This monarch issued an edict against the Jews (chap. 4 : 17-22), and brought the building of Jerusalem to a stand. Now, both profane writers and the inscriptions show us that the next king but one after Cyrus held a peculiar position. He was, as Darius himself tells us, a Magian, quite unconnected with the Persian royal family. He personated a deceased son of Cyrus, named Smerdis, and was allowed to reign on the supposition that he was really the prince whose name he assumed. He held the throne no more than seven months, but still he reigned long

enough to effect a religious revolution in Persia. He put down Zoroastrianism, destroyed the Zoroastrian temples and put a stop to the Zoroastrian worship, substituting Magianism in its place. Now, Magianism was the worship of the elements; it disdained temples and denied a personal God. It is clearly most natural, probable and readily intelligible that a monarch of this stamp should run counter to all the real Achæmenian princes on a religious matter; that, as a Magian, he should interfere to check the building of a magnificent temple, and as a Pantheist, should disallow the worship of Jehovah. Had we been told that any other of the early Persian kings set himself in opposition to the Jews, reversed the policy of Cyrus, and forbade the building of the Temple, we should have found ourselves confronted by a difficulty. The fact that it is the monarch who holds the place of the pseudo-Smerdis, that takes a peculiar line, one opposed to the policy

of the Achæmenians generally, turns the difficulty into an evidence. As the religious views of this monarch were wholly opposed to those of both his predecessors and successors, he would be almost certain to treat the Jews differently. If they, as Zoroastrians, sympathized with the people of Israel, he, as an anti-Zoroastrian, would dislike and suspect them. It may be added that his letter, being totally devoid of any religious sentiment, is characteristic, and contrasts remarkably with the decrees of Cyrus and Darius (Ezra 1 : 2-4 ; 6 : 6-12), and with the letter of Artaxerxes (7 : 12-26). G. R.

#### 24. Unto the second year of Darius.

The second year of Darius was B. C. 520. If the building ceased in the reign of the pseudo-Smerdis and was resumed in the second year of Darius, it was only interrupted for about two years, since the pseudo-Smerdis reigned less than a year. B. C. (See Section 50, closing paper.)

## Section 55.

DECREE OF DARIUS. TEMPLE FINISHED AND DEDICATED. PASSOVER KEPT.

EZRA 5 : 1-17 ; 6 : 1-22.

5 : 1 Now the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem ; in the name of the God of Israel *prophesied*  
 2 *they* unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Joza-  
 dak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem ; and with them were the  
 3 prophets of God, helping them. At the same time came to them Tattenai, the governor  
 beyond the river, and Shethar-bozenai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who  
 4 gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall? Then spake we unto them  
 5 after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building? But the eye of  
 their God was upon the elders of the Jews, and they did not make them cease, till the matter  
 should come to Darius, and then answer should be returned by letter concerning it.  
 6 The copy of the letter that Tattenai, the governor beyond the river, and Shethar-bozenai,  
 and his companions the Apharsachites, which were beyond the river, sent unto Darius the  
 7 king : they sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus ; Unto Darius the king, all  
 8 peace. Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judah, to the house of  
 the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this  
 9 work goeth on with diligence and prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders,  
 and said unto them thus, Who gave you a decree to build this house, and to finish this wall?  
 10 We asked them their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men  
 11 that were at the head of them. And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the ser-  
 vants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years  
 12 ago, which a great king of Israel builded and finished. But after that our fathers had pro-  
 voked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of  
 Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon.  
 13 But in the first year of Cyrus king of Babylon, the king made a decree to build this  
 14 house of God. And the gold and silver vessels also of the house of God, which Nebuchad-  
 nezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of

Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered  
 15 unto one whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor ; and he said unto  
 him, Take these vessels, go, put them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of  
 16 God be builded in its place. Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundations of  
 the house of God which is in Jerusalem : and since that time even until now hath it been in  
 17 building, and yet it is not completed. Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there  
 be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that  
 a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king  
 send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

6 : 1 Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the archives,  
 2 where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. And there was found at Achmetha, in the  
 3 palace that is in the province of Media, a roll, and therein was thus written for a record. In  
 the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree ; Concerning the house of God  
 at Jerusalem, let the house be builded, the place where they offer sacrifices, and let the founda-  
 tions thereof be strongly laid ; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof  
 4 threescore cubits ; with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber : and let the  
 5 expenses be given out of the king's house : and also let the gold and silver vessels of the  
 house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and  
 brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem,  
 6 every one to its place, and thou shalt put them in the house of God. Now therefore, Tattenai,  
 governor beyond the river, Shethar-bozenai, and your companions the Apharsachites,  
 7 which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence : let the work of this house of God alone ;  
 let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in its place.  
 8 Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to these elders of the Jews for the building of this  
 house of God : that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, expenses be  
 9 given with all diligence unto these men, that they be not hindered. And that which they  
 have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for burnt offerings to the God of  
 heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the word of the priests which are at Jerusa-  
 10 lem, let it be given them day by day without fail : that they may offer sacrifices of sweet  
 11 savour unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. Also I  
 have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let a beam be pulled out from his  
 house, and let him be lifted up and fastened thereon ; and let his house be made a dunghill  
 12 for this : and the God that hath caused his name to dwell there overthrow all kings and  
 peoples, that shall put forth their hand to alter *the same*, to destroy this house of God which  
 is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree ; let it be done with all diligence.  
 13 Then Tattenai, the governor beyond the river, Shethar-bozenai, and their companions,  
 14 because that Darius the king had sent, did accordingly with all diligence. And the elders of  
 the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah  
 the son of Iddo. And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the  
 God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of  
 15 Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the  
 16 sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, the Levites,  
 and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God  
 17 with joy. And they offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two  
 hundred rams, four hundred lambs ; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats,  
 18 according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their divisions,  
 and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem ; as it is written  
 in the book of Moses.  
 19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth *day* of the first  
 20 month. For the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together ; all of them were  
 pure : and they killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren  
 21 the priests, and for themselves. And the children of Israel, which were come again out of  
 the captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the  
 22 heathen of the land, to seek the LORD, the God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of  
 unleavened bread seven days with joy : for the LORD had made them joyful, and had turned  
 the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house  
 of God, the God of Israel.

**5 : 1, 2.** *Recommencement of the building in the second year of Darius. Preaching of Haggai and Zechariah.* It appears from the extant prophecies of these two prophets that the long frustration of their hopes had had its natural effect on the spirits of the people. They had begun to weary of endeavors which produced no practical result, and to despair of accomplishing an object which all their efforts did not perceptibly advance. A reaction had set in. The enthusiasm which had shown itself on the first arrival of the exiles with Zerubbabel (chap. 2 : 68, 69 ; 3 : 11) had faded away. Instead of watching for an opportunity of recommencing the great work and seizing the first occasion that offered itself, the people had come to acquiesce in its indefinite postponement, and to say among themselves, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built" (Hag. 1 : 2). Laying aside all idea of moving further in the matter of the Temple, they had turned their energies to the practical object of establishing themselves in good and comfortable houses (*ibid.* 1 : 4, 9). A whole year was allowed to elapse, and nothing was done. It was the *second* year of King Darius (Ezra 4 : 24)—nay, it was the *sixth month* of that year, the month Elul, corresponding to our September, as we learn from Haggai (1 : 1)—and still no step was taken. The nation was "eating" and "drinking" and "clothing itself" (*ibid.* 1 : 6), and making for itself "cieled houses" (*ibid.*, verse 4), while the house of God lay "waste" (*ibid.*, verse 9)—in that unsightly condition always presented by works commenced and then suspended for years. Such was the situation, when suddenly, unexpectedly, to the people's consternation rather than their joy, a prophet appeared upon the scene. "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel." Prophecy had been in abeyance for sixteen years, since the "third of Cyrus," when Daniel uttered his last warning (Dan. 10 : 1). It was now revived. Haggai came forward, self-proclaimed a prophet of Jehovah (Hag. 1 : 13), and rebuked the people in the old prophetic tone, and "stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and the spirit of Jeshua" (*ibid.*, verse 14), and by exhortations and warnings and threats brought about in little more than three weeks (*ibid.*, verse 15) the resumption of the work, which was henceforth pressed forward with zeal. Haggai's mission continued only for a very short space—from September, B.C. 520, to December of the same year ; but before his work came to an end

God raised up a second prophet—"Zechariah the son of Iddo"—who carried on his task, sustained the spirit of the people and the rulers, and saw the happy accomplishment of the great undertaking, which he had previously announced as near (Zech. 4 : 9), in the sixth year of Darius, B.C. 516. P. C.—Zechariah came forward "in the eighth month" of the second year (Zech. 1 : 1), and continued till the "ninth month of the fourth year" (*ibid.* 7 : 1)—December, B.C. 519—alternately by earnest warnings and glorious promises stimulating the zeal of the people, and arousing the lazy and indifferent to action. The historian of the period, twice over, ascribes very pointedly the successful issue of the work to the help which these two "prophets of God" afforded to the civil and ecclesiastical rulers, Zerubbabel and Joshua, through whose prophesying it was that they "prospered," and built the house of God, and finished it (Ezra 5 : 2 ; 6 : 14). G. R.

In 522 B.C., the last year of Cambyses, a Magian usurper, known as Gomates, or pseudo-Smerdis, or pseudo-Bardes, seized the throne of the Persian empire, and Cambyses died soon after. Herodotus and the Behistun inscription agree in dating this accession in the fifth month, though he began operations several months earlier. However we may explain the fact, the Bible calls Cambyses Ahasuerus, and calls the Magian Artaxerxes (Ezra 4 : 6, 7, 11, 23). The latter prohibited and stopped the work on the Temple. Early the following year, Darius Hystaspes overthrew the usurper and became king. The Jewish leaders then took the view that the prohibition had been illegal and void, so that, legally, there had been no cessation of the work (Ezra 5 : 16). They held that the charter given by Cyrus was still good (Ezra 5 : 18-16), but for some reason they did not go to work again on the Temple, though they assumed that the time had arrived for living in fine houses and farming on a large scale (Hag. 1 : 2, 4, 6). But that year Jehovah did not bless their enlarged enterprises. Drought was succeeded by storm and mildew (Hag. 1 : 10, 9 ; 2 : 17). The grain crop, and, later, all the successive fruit crops, proved a failure (Hag. 1 : 11 ; 2 : 16-19). In this condition of things the prophets Haggai and Zechariah set about persuading the people to take up their neglected duty (Ezra 5 : 1 ; 6 : 14).

*The Book of Haggai* is a collection of five brief prophecies, uttered at specified dates in the second year of Darius ; that is, between August and December, B.C. 520. Evidently these are some of the prophecies by which Hag-

gai urged the Jews to resume work on the Temple. The first prophecy (Hag. 1 : 1-11) rebukes them for saying that the time for building had not yet come. The second is simply the message, "I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts," with narrative statements (Hag. 1 : 12-15). The third prophecy is the lesson, the fourth is Hag. 2 : 10-19, and the fifth Hag. 2 : 20-23. Very likely these are brief sketches of what were, when the prophet uttered them, long discourses.

Far beyond all other outside sources for giving light on this part of the Bible is the great inscription of Darius, known as the Behistun inscription. It gives a dated narrative of the events immediately preceding and following his accession. At the time when Haggai prophesied, the Medes to the east under Phraortes, and the Armenians to the north, were in rebellion. Beginning with his first year, Darius speaks of nine great battles. The effect of this state of things on the enterprise at Jerusalem is obvious. Amid the convulsions of war, wealth, and especially Jewish wealth, hid itself throughout the distracted empire. It was not available for gifts for the Temple. And the Judean Jews themselves were impoverished by the failure of their crops, and were in apprehension lest the wave of war should reach them. And in addition to this, the interference mentioned in Ezra 5 : 8-17 had probably taken place by this time, and the case had gone to Darius, and they were agitated between hope and fear as to the result. In the circumstances, it is no wonder that the "house," with their feeble attempt to resume work upon it, seemed in their eyes "as nothing" (Hag. 2 : 3).

The original purpose of this prophecy (Hag. 2 : 1-9) evidently was to meet the condition of discouragement and depression that has just been sketched. In verse 2 it is addressed to the leaders and the people. In verse 3 allusion is made to the immediate occasion. Verse 4, except the last clause, is an exhortation to take courage and to work. The remainder of the prophecy gives reasons why they should do this. The first reason is expressed in the words, "For I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts" (verse 4, last clause). With this to encourage them, what could all possible discouragements amount to? In verses 6-9, in view of existing circumstances, the prophet promises that in "a little while," after one more earthquake of nations, an earthquake so widespread that heaven and earth, sea and dry land, will all quake, the present poverty-stricken condition of the Temple work shall cease. It shall become evident

that Jehovah owns the silver and the gold everywhere. "The desirable things of all nations shall come," furnishing abundant means for building and maintaining and honoring the Temple. Meanwhile, Judea shall not be involved in the existing convulsions. Jehovah will "give peace" there. In view of this promise, as well as of Jehovah's presence and covenant, they are exhorted to be fearless and hopeful. W. J. B.

**2. Then rose up Zerubbabel and Jeshua.** Haggai's preaching was especially addressed to these two leaders (Hag. 1 : 1), and their spirit was especially "stirred up" (*ibid.*, verse 14) by his preaching. The prophets of God—Haggai and Zechariah—were with them, throughout their work, helping them; and that in various ways. (1) By direct command to the people—"Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house" (Hag. 1 : 8); (2) by warnings—"Because of mine house that is waste . . . therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit" (*ibid.*, verses 9, 10); (3) by exhortations—"Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high-priest; and be ye strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work" (Hag. 2 : 4); and (4) by encouraging prophecy—"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it" (Zech. 4 : 9); and "the glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Hag. 2 : 9). By these and similar means the two prophets aroused a spirit of enthusiasm, which caused the work to make rapid progress, and was an invaluable assistance.

**3-17. Renewal of opposition on the part of the neighboring heathen.** Letter written by them and sent to Darius. Once more opposition showed itself. Tatnai, a high officer, called "governor on this side the river" (verse 3), perhaps satrap of Syria, and Shethar-boznai, a Persian noble probably, at this time took the lead, and learning that the building was making progress, came in person to Jerusalem and demanded to know by what authority the Temple and city were being restored. Zerubbabel seems to have answered, "By the authority of a decree of Cyrus, issued in the year that he became king of Babylon" (verse 13); whereupon a second question was asked, "What are the names of the men responsible for carrying on the work?" Zerubbabel answered that he was alone responsible, giving his name as Sheshbazzar, and de-

claring himself to be acting under a commission received from Cyrus (verse 15), and never revoked. Thereupon Tatnai and Shethar-boznai seem to have proposed a cessation of the building until reference could be made to Darius and his pleasure learned (verse 5); but Zerubabel declined to agree to this, and the work proceeded without intermission (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, a letter was written to Darius, not unfairly stating the case and suggesting that the state archives should be searched for the decree ascribed to Cyrus, that it might be seen what exactly it was that the decree sanctioned, and further that the king should expressly declare what his own pleasure was in the matter (verse 17). This letter Tatnai, in his capacity of satarap, despatched to the court by special messenger, and so left the business to the decision of Darius and his counsellors, without further seeking to influence him.

**4. Then said we unto them.** It is impossible that the existing text can be sound here. Ezra must have written, "Then said they to them." Tatnai and Shethar-boznai followed up their first question by a second, "What are the names of the men that make this building?" Compare below, verses 9, 10.

**5. The eye of their God was upon the elders.** "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous" (Ps. 34 : 15) with a jealous watchfulness, which never for a moment slackens. "He withdraweth not His eyes from them" (Job 36 : 7). Nothing happens to them that He does not know and allow. At this time the elders, who presided over the workmen employed in the restoration, were a special subject of God's watchful care, so that those who would fain had hindered them could not. P. C.—There is suggested here a prompting, controlling influence exerted upon them from on high. God saw them, and beholding their difficulty and their need of His Divine help, interposed to sustain their courage, to strengthen their hand, to uphold them in their work. This is a power to be earnestly sought and found, in believing prayer, when we are passing through the time of trial. *Clarkson.*—The Divine providence watches the Church earnestly in the midst of its enemies. The look sends light, means love, indicates help, should inspire trust. Let the eye of the Church be toward God. The Church must remember that the eye of God is upon it, and not to yield to the enemy. History proves that God's eye is upon the Church; the Bible asserts it; reason suggests that the Heavenly Father will watch over His troubled children and workers. P. C.

—The elders of the Jews saw the eye of God upon them, to observe what they did and own them in what they did well, and then they had courage enough to go on vigorously with their work, notwithstanding all the opposition they met with. Our eye upon God observing His eye upon us will keep us to our duty and encourage us in it, when the difficulties are ever so discouraging. H.

**9-11.** The answer of the elders to the official inquiries put to them is heard with candor and reported with truth. Nor are any charges made, as before, of treachery or sedition. Nor is anything more proposed to the king than a due hearing and examination of the appeal which the Jews have made to a previous edict of Cyrus in justification of their conduct (verse 17). Meanwhile, moreover, though apparently with some reluctance, the chief authorities of the province in which Judea was situated have consented to treat that justification as being, till proved otherwise, sufficient and valid, by allowing that work to go on without endeavoring to stop it by menace or force.

**11. We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth.** Instead of giving in a list of names and titles of office, the elders merge their individuality in this general phrase; as though they would say, "As individuals, we are nothing; as men of mark in our nation, we are nothing; what we do, we do simply as servants of God, directed by Him (Hag. 1 : 8), bound to obey Him, answerable only to Him for our conduct." **And build.** That is, "rebuild." The house that was builded these many years ago. The old house, begun more than four hundred, finished nearly four hundred years previously, and only just beginning to rise again from its ruins, after lying waste for nearly seventy years.

**13. In the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon.** Recent discoveries of contract tablets have shown that at Babylon Cyrus bore the title of "king of Babylon" from the date of his conquest of the city. The same title was passed on to his successors, Cambyses, Darius, etc. Hence we find Artaxerxes Longimanus called "king of Babylon" by Nehemiah (13 : 6).

**17.** Libraries or record chambers were attached to the royal residences under the old Assyrian and Babylonian kings; and the practice was no doubt continued by the Persians. Some of these record offices have been recently found, and their stores recovered. More recently, in 1875-6, some Arab explorers happened upon a similar collection near Babylon,



which yielded from 3000 to 4000 tablets. It is quite possible that the "decree of Cyrus" may still exist, and be one day recovered. P. C.

**6:1-5.** *Discovery of the decree of Cyrus on the subject of the Temple, and recital of its exact terms.* The application made by the satrap of Syria to Darius received his immediate attention. A search was instituted—in the first instance at Babylon, but afterward at the other capitals also, and in Ecbatana, the Median metropolis, where the Persian kings always resided during a portion of the year, a copy of the original decree was found, which is considerably fuller and more definite, though in some respects covering less ground, than the "proclamation" with which Ezra opens his history. The decree not merely provided for the rebuilding of the Temple, but gave directions for its dimensions and for the style of its construction, points on which the proclamation said nothing; it also provided that the whole cost (of the materials) should be defrayed out of the royal revenue; and it concluded with an express command that *all* the gold and silver vessels carried off by Nebuchadnezzar should be restored. We may account for the decree not being found at Babylon or Susa by the pseudo-Smerdis having destroyed it when he was accomplishing his religious reforms, though accidentally he omitted to destroy the copy laid up at Ecbatana; thus, as so often happens with wicked men, by a slip of memory frustrating his own intention. P. C.

**1. The house of the rolls.** A "house of the rolls" (literally, "writings," or "books") was discovered at Koyunjik, the ancient Nineveh, by Mr. Layard in the year 1850—a set of chambers—*i. e.*, in the palace devoted exclusively to the storing of public documents. These were in baked clay, and covered the floor to the depth of more than a foot. (See "Nineveh and Babylon," p. 345.) Such a "house" was probably that at Babylon, which Darius caused to be searched first of all, in accordance with the suggestion of Tatnai (chap. 5:17), for the edict of Cyrus. B. C.

**6-15.** *Decree issued by Darius in furtherance of the decree of Cyrus. Obedience of the Persian officials, and rapid completion of the Temple.* The religious policy of Darius being directly opposed to that of his immediate predecessor, he would naturally reverse his decree with respect to the Jews (chap. 4:11-22). He would also be glad to show himself in accordance with the great founder of the empire, who was universally revered, and regarded as a truly wise king. Hence his recital of the decree of

Cyrus, which it would have been enough merely to have referred to. By recalling its terms he showed how completely his policy tallied with that of Cyrus, and how thoroughly he inherited the spirit of the first monarch. We may also give him credit for a real sympathy with the Jewish religion, and a real belief that the prayers of the Jews in their recovered sanctuary would bring God's blessing upon himself and his children (verse 10). His decree is not a mere formal and colorless document, but breathes a reverential spirit and shows him at least as true a servant of Jehovah as Cyrus. The Persian officials, Tatnai and Shethar-boznai, had no choice as to their line of action. The king's word was law; and his favor, when clearly manifested, secured to the objects of it the warmest assurances of good-will and the most active help, on the part of every official in the empire from the highest to the lowest. The Temple, therefore, made rapid progress, and within four years of the time when Zerubbabel and Jeshua resumed the building (chap. 5:2), the entire work was completed—"the house was finished." The whole time which elapsed between the laying of the foundation (Ezra 3:10) and the completion was twenty-one years; but scarcely any progress had been made till Haggai began his preaching. The main part of the work was accomplished between the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius (Hag. 1:15) and the third day of the twelfth month of his sixth year. This was a space of four years and a half. The Temple of Solomon, after a long term of preparation, occupied in its construction seven years and a half (1 K. 6:37, 38). P. C.

**12.** *I, Darius, have made a decree.* By virtue of this decree the Jews were not only fully authorized to go on with the building, but were also furnished with the expenses of it out of the taxes of the province. This had been granted by Cyrus in the former decree; but by the underhand dealings of the Samaritans and other enemies, in bribing those through whose hands the administration of public affairs and the public revenues passed, this part of Cyrus's decree was rendered ineffectual. For a long time, therefore, the Jews, being forced to carry on the work at their own charges and being in a state of great poverty so soon after their return from captivity, made a very slow progress. Now, being largely assisted by the king's bounty, they engaged in the building with such diligence that they soon brought it to a conclusion. The publication of this decree at Jeru-

salem may be reckoned the complete restoration of the Jewish state. *Prideaux.*

**13. So they did speedily.** Tatnai and Shethar-boznai showed no reluctance. They had no enmity against the Jews. Once clearly advertised of the king's wishes, they carried them out with zeal. The rapid completion of the Temple must be in part attributed to their good-will. P. C.

**14.** The Artaxerxes of chap. 7 seems to be meant (*i.e.*, Longimanus). As Artaxerxes contributed to the *beautifying* of the Temple (chap. 7: 20), and promoted the same by his edict (*ibid.* 13-20), he might be thought to deserve mention, together with Cyrus and Darius, as one of those who helped forward the *completion* of the work. B. C.

**14-22.** *Literary character of the passage.* It consists of three parts—verses 14 and 15, 16-18 and 19-22. The first part describes the progress and completion of the Temple; the second part its dedication; and the third part the keeping of the passover, a few weeks later. The first two parts are in Aramaic. With them closes the Aramaic document which began at Ezra 4: 8. The third part is in Hebrew, and with it the first part of Ezra closes. The following chapter begins a new narrative, dealing with events that open fifty-seven years later.

**14.** *The prophesying.* Here, as in Ezra 5: 1, much is made of the influence of these two prophets. Their work was not confined to the uttering of the few hundred words of prophecy which we now have from them, but they were busy day by day, pushing forward the enterprise. W. J. B.

**15. The house was finished on the third day of the month Adar.** Haggai (1: 15) gives the exact day of the recommencement of the work as the twenty-fourth of Elul in Darius' second year. Ezra here gives the exact day of the completion. From Zerubbabel's laying of the foundation (Ezra 3: 10), the time that had elapsed was twenty-one years. From the recommencement under the inspiring influence of the two prophets, the time was only four years, five months, and ten days.

**16-18.** *Dedication of the second Temple.* Following the example of Solomon, who had solemnly "dedicated" the first Temple (1 K. 8: 63), and had offered on the occasion a sacrifice unexampled for its magnitude in the whole of Jewish history (*ibid.*), Zerubbabel now, under the advice of the two prophets, inaugurated the new building with a similar ceremony. In

"the day of small things" it was not possible for him to emulate Solomon's magnificence in respect of the number of victims. Solomon had sacrificed 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. Zerubbabel's means only enabled him to make an offering of 712 animals, more than half of them lambs. He did, however, according to his ability; and God, who accepts all our endeavors according to that we have and not according to that we have not, was content to receive graciously the humble offering made to Him. P. C.

**17. All Israel.** Notice that there were twelve he-goats, and that this was "according to the number of the tribes." With this compare "Israel" and "God of Israel" (verses 16 and 14). Very marked is this claim that the returned exiles were the entire nation and not the two Judean tribes only. W. J. B.—**According to the number of the tribes.** We are here supplied with an additional proof that, on the return of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin from the Babylonish captivity, many also of each of the other tribes returned with them from Assyria, Babylonia and Media, whither they had been carried; and, joining with them in rebuilding of the Temple, partook in the solemnity of the dedication; otherwise there is no reason why the sin-offering should now be offered in behalf of all the Twelve Tribes. Since, however, the greater part of those who returned consisted of the tribe of Judah, their name swallowed up the names of all the rest; for from this time the whole people of Israel began to be called Jews. *Prideaux.*

**18. As it is written in the Book of Moses.** The allusion is to such passages as Num. 3: 6; 8: 9, etc., where the Levites are set apart for the service of the tabernacle. P. C.

**19-22.** *Celebration of the passover in the ensuing month, and observance of the feast of unleavened bread.* Specially solemn passovers were celebrated on specially solemn occasions; and these received special record at the hands of the sacred writers. Of this kind are the passover celebrated by Hezekiah in the year B.C. 726, recorded in 2 Chron. 30, and that celebrated by Josiah in B.C. 624, recorded in 2 Chron. 35. Both of these followed upon a cleansing of the Temple and restoration of the Temple worship after a period of suspension. Ezra seems to place the passover of B.C. 516 in the same category. It marked the period of the full re-establishment of the regular ordinances of religion, more or less interrupted from the

time of the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar. It terminated the abnormal and commenced the normal condition of things. Perhaps it is to mark this that Ezra at this point disuses the Chaldee dialect, which he had introduced in chap. 4:8, and returns to the Hebrew, the established language of the Jewish religion. With the exception of the letter of Artaxerxes (chap. 7:12-26), all the remainder of the book is in Hebrew. Six memorable passovers are mentioned in Old Testament Scripture. The first was in Egypt (Ex. 12). The second in the wilderness (Num. 11). The third at Gilgal (Josh. 5). The fourth in the days of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 30). The fifth in the eighteenth year of Josiah (2 K. 23). The sixth is that here mentioned. P. C.

**21. All such as had separated themselves unto them.** These must either have been Israelites who had remained in Palestine through the period of the Captivity, or proselytes from the heathen, who were now received into the Jewish state. B. C.—The one condition for partaking of the passover was that the participant should be separated from the nations of the earth and identified with the people of Jehovah. Those who partook on this occasion were of two classes: first, the returned exiles and their families, who were already thus separated; and, second, others who should submit themselves to the ceremonial forms by which the separation was externally indicated. It is probable that most of these were persons of Israelite blood, who had been living in Palestine among people of other races, and who now came out and identified themselves with their own people. But the phrase is broad enough to include proselytes also. If there were proselytes, the fact fits well with the promise made by Zechariah two years before (Zech. 8:20-23). In fine, the whole meaning of the statement is that they carried out in its spirit, and doubtless also in its letter, the passover precept of Ex. 12:43-45, 47-49.

**22. The king of Assyria.** This phrase gives an interesting glimpse at the point of view of this writer. In his mind Assyria and Babylonia and Persia are successive names for the great Asiatic empire which oppressed Israel for generation after generation. That the heart of the monarch of this empire should be turned to helping the worship of Jehovah, instead of opposing it, seemed to him a notable instance of the lovingkindness of Israel's God. W. J. B.

*Points Emphasized.* If you would be made hot and hopeful in speaking for the cause and kingdom of Christ, fill your mind with Bible

facts. A day of studious reading of Bible history is worth a dozen days spent in reading the petty criticisms of that class of advanced scholars whose chief effort is to show us what not to believe. Never consent to look upon the dark side of this world's condition any more than you can help. If Haggai had read a paper to those returned Israelites, showing by statistics how greatly the heathen outnumbered the Hebrews and how derelict the Hebrews were as compared with the heathen in pushing their religions, we cannot imagine that they would have been stirred to start the building. Instead of dolefully lamenting the defects of the past we would better imitate the prophet in asserting that God is pledged that Christ shall have the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. *J. L. Withrow.*

There was still an Israel, after all the dreary years and in spite of present separation. God was still its God, though He had hidden His face for so long. An inextinguishable faith, wistful but assured, in His unalterable promise, throbs in that name, so little warranted by a superficial view of circumstances, but so amply vindicated by a deeper insight. His "commandment" is at once the warrant and the standard for the work of building. In His service we are to be sure that He bids, and then to carry out His will, whoever opposes. We are to make certain that our building is "according to the pattern showed in the mount," and if so, to stick to it in every point. There is no room for more than one architect in rearing the Temple. The working drawings must come from Him. We are only His workmen. And though we may know no more of the general plan of the structure than the day-laborer who carries a hod does, we must be sure that we have His orders for our little bit of work, and then we may be at rest even while we toil. They who build according to His commandment build for eternity, and their work shall stand the trial by fire. That motive makes what without it were but "wood, hay, stubble," into "gold and silver and precious stones." A. M.

The Temple of old was sacred supremely because in it Jehovah dwelt and manifested Himself. Only on that account was it sacred. The most sacred temple of our age (1 Cor. 3:10-16) is the human heart which has welcomed Christ's spirit into its holy of holies. There is nothing so sacred on earth now as a true believer in Christ. For such He shed His blood and pledges all His power to build the life up unto the moral

likeness of Himself. As the less costly and elegant Temple of Zerubbabel became more honored than the more splendid one of Solomon, so a plain church and a poor saint will be better off than the rich, if only Jesus dwells within. *Withdraw.*

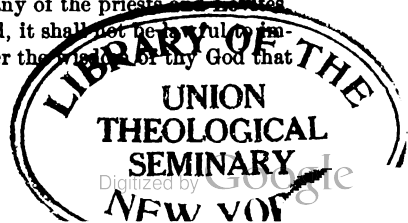
## Section 56.

EZRA LEADS A SECOND COLONY TO JERUSALEM, FIFTY-EIGHT YEARS LATER.

EZRA 7 : 1-28 ; 8 : 1-36.

7 : 1 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the son of  
 2 Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son  
 3, 4 of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth, the son of Zerahiah,  
 5 the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinchas, the son of Eleazar,  
 6 the son of Aaron the chief priest : this Ezra went up from Babylon ; and he was a ready  
 scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD, the God of Israel, had given : and the king  
 7 granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him. And there  
 went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers,  
 and the porters, and the Nethinim, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the  
 8 king. And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the  
 9 king. For upon the first *day* of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the  
 first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon  
 10 him. For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in  
 Israel statutes and judgements.

11 Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the  
 scribe, even the scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to  
 12 Israel. Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of  
 13 heaven, perfect and so forth. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and their  
 priests and the Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go to Jeru-  
 14 salem, go with thee. Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king and his seven counsellors, to  
 inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine  
 15 hand ; and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely  
 16 offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem, and all the silver and gold  
 that thou shalt find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people,  
 17 and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem ; there-  
 fore thou shalt with all diligence buy with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meal  
 offerings and their drink offerings, and shalt offer them upon the altar of the house of your  
 18 God which is in Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee and to thy brethren to  
 19 do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that do ye after the will of your God. And the  
 vessels that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, deliver thou before the  
 20 God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which  
 21 thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house. And I, even  
 I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasures which are beyond the river, that  
 whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you,  
 22 it be done with all diligence, unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures  
 of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without  
 23 prescribing how much. Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done  
 exactly for the house of the God of heaven ; for why should there be wrath against the realm  
 24 of the king and his sons? Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites,  
 the singers, porters, Nethinim, or servants of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to im-  
 25 pose tribute, custom, or toll, upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God that



is in thine hand, appoint magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God ; and teach ye him that knoweth them  
 26 not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgement be executed upon him with all diligence, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

27 Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the  
 28 king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem ; and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

§ : 1 Now these are the heads of their fathers' houses, and this is the genealogy of them  
 2 that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. Of the sons of  
 3 Phinehas, Gershom : of the sons of Ithamar, Daniel : of the sons of David, Hattush. Of the  
 4 sons of Shecaniah ; of the sons of P'trosh, Zechariah : and with him were reckoned by genealogy  
 5 of the males an hundred and fifty. Of the sons of Pahath-moab, Eliehoenai the son of  
 6 Zeraiiah ; and with him two hundred males. Of the sons of Shecaniah, the son of Jahaziel ;  
 7 and with him three hundred males. And of the sons of Adin, Ebed the son of Jonathan ; and  
 8 with him fifty males. And of the sons of Elam, Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah ; and with him  
 9 seventy males. And of the sons of Shephatiah, Zebadiah the son of Michael ; and with him  
 10 fourscore males. Of the sons of Joab, Obadiah the son of Jehiel ; and with him two hundred  
 11 and eighteen males. And of the sons of Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah ; and with him an  
 12 hundred and threescore males. And of the sons of Bebai, Zechariah the son of Bebai ; and  
 13 with him twenty and eight males. And of the sons of Azgad, Johanan the son of Hakkatan ;  
 14 and with him an hundred and ten males. And of the sons of Adonikam, *that were the last* ;  
 15 and these are their names, Eliphelet, Jeuel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males.

16 And of the sons of Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud ; and with them seventy males.  
 17 And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava ; and there we encamped  
 18 three days : and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of  
 19 Levi. Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and  
 20 for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men ; also for  
 21 Joiarib, and for Elnathan, which were teachers. And I sent them forth unto Iddo the chief  
 22 at the place Casiphia ; and I told them what they should say unto Iddo *and* his brethren the  
 23 Nethinim, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our  
 24 God. And according to the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of discretion,  
 25 of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel ; and Sherebiah, with his sons and  
 26 his brethren, eighteen ; and Hashabiah, and with him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his  
 27 brethren and their sons, twenty ; and of the Nethinim, whom David and the princes had  
 28 given for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinim : all of them were  
 29 expressed by name. Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might  
 30 humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way, for us, and for our little  
 31 ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and  
 32 horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way : because we had spoken unto the king,  
 33 saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good ; but his power and his  
 34 wrath is against all them that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this :  
 35 and he was intreated of us. When I separated twelve of the chiefs of the priests, even  
 36 Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them, and weighed unto them the silver,  
 and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering for the house of our God, which the king, and  
 his counsellors, and his princes, and all Israel there present, had offered : I even weighed  
 into their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver vessels an hundred talents ;  
 27 of gold an hundred talents ; and twenty bowls of gold, of a thousand darics ; and two vessels  
 28 of fine bright brass, precious as gold. And I said unto them, Ye are holy unto the LORD,  
 and the vessels are holy ; and the silver and the gold are a freewill offering unto the LORD,  
 29 the God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chiefs  
 of the priests and the Levites, and the princes of the fathers' houses of Israel, at Jerusalem, in  
 30 the chambers of the house of the LORD. So the priests and the Levites received the weight  
 of the silver and the gold, and the vessels, to bring them to Jerusalem unto the house of our  
 God.

31 Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go  
 32 unto Jerusalem : and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of  
 33 the enemy and the liar in wait by the way. And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there  
 34 three days. And on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in  
 35 the house of our God into the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest ; and with him  
 was Eleazar the son of Phinehas ; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and  
 36 Noadiah the son of Binnui, the Levites ; the whole by number and by weight : and all the  
 weight was written at that time. The children of the captivity, which were come out of  
 exile, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and  
 six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he-goats for a sin offering : all this was a burnt  
 offering unto the LORD. And they delivered the kings' commissions unto the king's satraps,  
 and to the governors beyond the river : and they furthered the people and the house of God.

FEW readers of Scripture history look to dates; and it will surprise many to learn that when Ezra made up his second great caravan of pilgrims for Jerusalem, the new Temple had been completed nearly sixty years, and it was nearly eighty years since the first caravan of pilgrims set out under Zerubbabel, who, with all that generation, had been long since dead. *Kitto*.

It was about sixty years "after these things" that the second expedition left Babylon. Darius continued to reign for thirty-one years. Then Ahasuerus (Xerxes) was king for twenty-one years; so that the whole Book of Esther falls chronologically within the gap between the 6th and 7th chapters of the history before us. Artaxerxes succeeded Xerxes; and in the seventh year of his reign, with his cordial approval, Ezra in person led a second company of Jews to Jerusalem. They were not nearly so many as returned with Zerubbabel, for by this time the Jews had made themselves at home in various provinces of the empire; they had prospered greatly under Esther and Mordecai, in the latter years of Xerxes, and were not very eager to exchange their rich settlements among the heathen for the poor prospect of recolonizing Judea. But Ezra gathered together "chief men of Israel," with a good many priests and Levites, and received from the king a valuable offering of gold and silver vessels for the new Temple at Jerusalem. D. F.

The Temple was complete just before the spring equinox of B.C. 515. From the passover, a few weeks later, to B.C. 458, the Old Testament is silent as to events in Palestine. During the later half of the interval was the reign of Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Book of Esther. In B.C. 458, thirteen years before the arrival of Nehemiah, Ezra came to Jerusalem, and the events recorded in the last four chapters of Ezra took place. We are compelled to think of Ezra as already an old man, though he lived at least twenty-five years after this (Neh. 12:36). He had gained distinction as a student of the sacred laws of Israel. He brought with him a large company, including numerous trained Levites, singers, and other Temple attendants. He brought also rich gifts from the Persian emperor Artaxerxes and others, and requisitions on the Persian officials of the region for additional supplies. And, most important of all, he brought with him authority from the king for enforcing the Israelitish sacred laws on all who recognized them, or could be led to recognize them (Ezra 7:25). The details that are given of the mis-

sion of Ezra justify the inference that the Palestine Jews, during the fifty-eight years since the completion of the Temple, had not been in the highest degree exemplary and prosperous. W. J. B.

Ezra, a member of the high-priest's family, a descendant of Seraiah, the "chief priest" at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (2 K. 25:18), and probably a third cousin of the existing high-priest, Eliashib, having access to Artaxerxes, and, apparently a certain influence with him, asked (chap. 7:6) and obtained the royal permission to reinforce the colony in Judea by a fresh body of emigrants, and at the same time to convey to Jerusalem a sum of money, which the Babylonian Jews had subscribed toward the Temple service (*ibid.*, verse 16). Artaxerxes appears to have had a high respect for Ezra; he recognized in him one possessed of wisdom from on high (verse 25), and readily granted him not only the request that he had made, but an important commission, which was mainly one of inquiry (verse 14), but which made him for a time paramount civil ruler of the province, with power of life and death over its inhabitants (verse 26); and also conferred upon the Jewish people certain valuable gifts and privileges. The terms of the decree are set forth in chap. 7:12-26, where the Chaldee version of the text, as published by Artaxerxes, is probably given *verbatim et literatim*. After reciting it, Ezra breaks out into a brief but earnest burst of thanksgiving and acknowledgment of God's goodness, which concludes chap. 7, occupying the last two verses. He then proceeds, in chap. 8, to give an account of the number of the Jews who returned with him, with the names of their leaders, whom he calls "chief of the fathers." Having completed his list in verse 14, he goes on (verses 15-31) to describe the circumstances of the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, which occupied exactly four months, commencing on the first day of the first month and terminating on the first day of the fifth month (chap. 7:9). In conclusion, he tells us how, after a rest of three days, he discharged himself of the most pressing of the commissions entrusted to him, delivering over to the priests in charge of the Temple the gifts sent by Artaxerxes, and making known to the various Persian officials of the district the terms of the royal decree so far as they were affected by it (chap. 8:32-36). P. C.

The crown of Persia passed, on the death of Xerxes (Ahasuerus of "Esther"), after a certain period of disturbance, to the youngest of

his sons, Artaxerxes, whom the Greeks called "Macrocheir" and the Romans "Longimanus." He was not much more than a boy at his accession, and had some difficulty in maintaining himself upon the throne; but after seven months of indecision, he adopted a vigorous policy, punished Artabanus, the murderer of his father, and his tool, Aspamitres, with death, and undertook the active direction of the state. After suppressing a revolt in Bactria, in which he gained some military distinction, his attention was turned, in the fifth year of his reign, toward Egypt, where an insurrection had broken out under Inarus, an African chief, and Amyrtæus, a native Egyptian, which threatened the gravest danger to the empire, since it was fomented by the Athenians. It may well have been in connection with this most important rebellion, which was not suppressed till six years later, that the great monarch took into special consideration the condition of Palestine, which lay upon the Egyptian border; and, regarding the Judeans as the most faithful of all his subjects in that quarter, resolved to attach them as closely as possible to his interests by favors which should recall the old kindness and the old munificence of Cyrus and of Darius Hystaspes. He resolved to renew the permission which had been given, eighty years earlier, by Cyrus, and to make a decree that "all they of the people of Israel in all his realm, and of their priests and Levites, which were minded to go up to Jerusalem," should be at liberty to do so (Ezra 7:13). The terms of his decree seem to imply something like a close personal knowledge of Ezra. Ezra is described as "the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect." "The law of his God is in his hand," and "the wisdom of his God." He is trusted to an almost unlimited extent. He is addressed in the second person (7:14-25). Ezra had clearly gained the deep respect and high approval of the Persian king, who must have formed an extraordinary estimate of his character and capacity. Personal knowledge best explains this high estimate, and is quite conceivable under the circumstances. G. R.

**7:1-5.** *The genealogy of Ezra.* It is plain that this genealogy is incomplete. It gives no more than sixteen generations between Ezra and Aaron, whereas the number of generations between Zerubbabel and Nathon, prince of Judah in Aaron's time, was twenty-six (1 Chron. 2:10-15; 3:5-19), and that between Aaron himself and Eliashib at least as many (1 Chron. 6:3-15; 9:11; Neh. 12:10). Six names are omitted between the Azariah and Meraioth of

verse 8, which will be found in 1 Chron. 6:7-10; and at least three must be wanting between Ezra himself and Seraiah, who was the great-great-grandfather of Eliashib, Ezra's contemporary (Neh. 3:1; 13:4). The curtailment of genealogies by the omission of names was a common practice of the Jews. A notable instance is the omission of three *royal* names in Matthew's genealogy of our Lord. P. C.

**6. Law of Moses.** Moses is, humanly speaking, the great deliverer, leader and legislator of the Hebrew people. The work accomplished by him has no parallel in history. No other legislator, no prophet, priest or king ever wrought to such purpose, or with so lasting efficiency, as he did. A new polity, new institutions, new laws and a revived spiritual religion could not be made, as it were, to spring up at once out of the earth, but must have time to grow up slowly, and thus to become inrooted in the hearts and habits of the people. Hence the persistency, the abiding character, of the Mosaic legislation. F. Bowen.

**6-10.** *Ezra's journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, with dates.* In introducing himself, Ezra seems to regard it as of primary importance to state two things—who he was, and what place he had in a history of which the main object is to give an account of the return of Israel from captivity. In connection with the former point he gives, first of all, his genealogy; and, secondly, the account of himself contained in verses 6 and 10. He describes himself as "a ready scribe,"—one who "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it," and also "to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." In connection with the latter, he is careful to put before us at once the fact that he too, like Zerubbabel, "went up from Babylon" to Jerusalem by the permission of the Persian king, and, like Zerubbabel, was accompanied by priests, Levites, both singers and porters, Nethinim, and a number of the people (verse 7). He adds an exact statement as to the date of both his departure and arrival, very natural in one who is his own biographer, and very interesting to the general historian. He also, without any parade of religious sentiment, acknowledges the hand of God as directing, helping and sustaining him in all his proceedings, ascribing to the Divine favor, especially, Artaxerxes' allowance of his journey, and his safe accomplishment of it (verses 6, 9).

**11-26.** *The decree of Artaxerxes with respect to Ezra.* The present decree embodied, in the first place, a certain number of provisions which were temporary. Of this character were—(1)

the permission accorded to all Persian subjects of Israelite descent to accompany Ezra to Jerusalem (verse 13); (2) the commission to Ezra to convey to Jerusalem certain offerings made by the king and his chief courtiers to the God of Israel (verses 15, 19); (3) the permission given him to convey to Jerusalem the freewill offerings of Jews and others resident in Babylonia (verse 16); (4) permission to Ezra to draw on the royal treasury to the amount of a hundred talents of silver, a hundred measures of wheat, a hundred "baths" of wine, a hundred "baths" of oil, and salt to any amount (verse 22); and (5) an indefinite commission to "inquire" (verse 14). Besides these temporary enactments, the decree contained certain provisions of a more permanent nature. 1. Ezra was invested with the chief authority over the whole district "beyond the river," and was commissioned to appoint all the subordinate "magistrates and judges" (verse 25). 2. He was authorized to enforce his decisions by the penalties of imprisonment, confiscation of goods, banishment, and even death itself (verse 26). 3. An exemption from taxation of every kind was granted to all grades of the sacerdotal order—to the priests, the Levites, the singers, the porters, the Nethinim, and the lowest grade of "ministers"—to all, in fact, who were engaged in the performance of any sacred function connected with the Temple (verse 24). This last provision was absolutely permanent, and probably continued in force down to the close of the empire.

The insertion here of this decree of Artaxerxes at length, and in its original Chaldee form, is in more or less close keeping with the earlier parts of this book (1: 2-4; 4: 11-16, 17-22; 5: 6-17; 6: 3-12), and furnishes an argument, therefore, strongly in favor of the unity of authorship of the whole book.

**13. All they of the people of Israel.** The decree of Artaxerxes is as wide in its terms as the proclamation of Cyrus (chap. 1: 3), and gives permission not to the Jews only, but to all Israelites of whatever tribe, to accompany Ezra to Jerusalem. That Israelites of all the tribes actually went up to Jerusalem on the occasion seems indicated by the "twelve bullocks for all Israel," which those who returned with Ezra offered on their arrival to the "God of Israel."

**14.** Ezra received his commission from the king and from his seven counsellors, who thus seem to occupy an important position in the Persian state. They are commonly identified with the "seven princes of Persia and Media," mentioned in Esther (1: 14), "which saw the

king's face," and "sate first in the kingdom."

**20. Whatever more shall be needful.** Here the terms of the *firman* are very wide indeed, and authorize apparently an unlimited application of the royal revenue, or, at any rate, of the revenue of the province, to any purpose in any way connected with the Temple.

**23. Why should there be wrath against the realm?** In the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus there was "wrath against the realm" of Persia in a very dangerous quarter—viz., Egypt. Egypt had revolted from the Persians in B.C. 460, and in the following year, with the assistance of the Athenians, had driven the last Persian out of the country. In B.C. 458, Artaxerxes' seventh year, it was resolved that a Persian force should attempt the recovery of the revolted country. Artaxerxes gives his *firman* to Ezra when this expedition is preparing to start, and partly alludes to the past "wrath," shown in the success of the rebels, partly deprecates any further visitation. Without pretending to penetrate the Divine counsels, it may be noticed that from the year B.C. 458 things went well for the Persians in Egypt. Memphis was recovered in that year or the next; and in B.C. 455 the Athenians were finally defeated.

**27, 28.** *Ezra's thanksgiving on receipt of Artaxerxes' letter.* With an abruptness that may appear strange, but which has many parallels in the works of Oriental writers, Ezra passes without a word of explanation from Artaxerxes' letter to his own thanksgiving upon the receipt of it.

**27.** Having concluded the important document which he has transcribed and not translated, and which is consequently in the Chaldee dialect, Ezra now resumes the use of the more sacred Hebrew, and henceforth employs it uninterruptedly to the close of his narrative. The form of his thanksgiving a little resembles that of David in 1 Chron. 29: 10.

Very abruptly, even in our translation, does this short psalm of praise come in. We may take these words as giving us a peculiarly life-like picture of Ezra's feelings, both when first receiving this decree of the king and also when afterward committing it to writing. Thus seen they teach us specially his true piety and his sincere humility.

**27.** In the eyes of God's true servants, every blessing to God's house and people (God's house in the highest sense, 1 Pet. 2: 5) is a blessing to themselves. This feature, also, is the more



noticeable here, because in that decree which led to this praise nothing is said, except most indirectly, as to the beautifying of God's house. But Ezra, with his great desire for the good of that house, and his zealous intentions in that direction, perceived with admiration and praise how all the provisions of that decree could and would be used in that manner. To have God worshipped in the proper way was the great desire of his heart. Whatever, therefore, promised to help this on was to him a great joy. So with all who truly love God. . . . With all his spirit of praise, with all his constant reference to God's "hand," and constant dependence on God's power, his was no indolent soul. Rather, by this "good hand" of God upon him, he was the more stirred up in work and encouraged. This is just the spirit of true faith.

**8:1-14.** *The number of those who went up to Jerusalem with Ezra, and the names of the chief men.* This list is parallel with that of chap. 2:3-19, and repeats for the most part the same family names, though not quite in the same order. The numbers are in each case very much smaller, never amounting to one third, and sometimes falling below one twelfth. The entire number of adult male colonists who accompanied Ezra was, including Levites and Nethinim, 1773. Counting five to a family, this would give a total of nearly 9000 souls.

**15-31.** *Details of Ezra's journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.* We gather from scattered statements in this passage (1) that Ezra, with his companions, after a journey of nine days' duration, reached Ahava from Babylon on the ninth day of the first month; (2) that he rested three days at Ahava, and proclaimed a fast; (3) that he was there joined by a small number of Levites and a considerable body of Nethinim from the immediate neighborhood; (4) that on the twelfth day of the first month he resumed his journey, and though threatened by some opposition upon the way, arrived safely at his destination fourteen weeks after he quitted Ahava, and exactly four months after he had started from Babylon. The only other important fact mentioned is, that at Ahava twelve of the principal priests were selected by Ezra, and the royal offering of silver, gold and vessels handed over to them for safe custody, after having been carefully weighed. The weights are recorded with Ezra's usual exactness in verses 26, 27. P. C.

**15-20.** Ezra determined on a halt of three days. Ahava was a pleasant spot, on the banks of the Euphrates, where a small stream flowed

into it from the east. Ezra, having ordered the tents to be pitched, proceeded to hold a muster of the colonists, who were, perhaps, now for the first time counted, and assigned to their several families (Ezra 8:1-15). In making out the muster-roll, the Jewish leader was greatly struck with the fact that, while a certain number of the priests had accompanied him from Babylon, there was not in the entire caravan a single person belonging to the class of simple Levites. There was a Jewish settlement at a place called Casiphia in the neighborhood of Ahava (*ibid.*, verse 17). To this place, where he knew that there were Levites and Nethinim, Ezra sent a formal embassy, consisting of twelve Israelites, to represent the Twelve Tribes, and begged the Casiphians to reinforce his colony by a supply of these lower ministers and servants of the Temple, who were quite as much needed as priests for the service of the sanctuary. The Casiphians, who had at their head a chief called Iddo, readily consented; and Ezra in this way obtained an addition to his followers of thirty-eight Levites of full age, and two hundred and twenty Nethinim. G. R.

**21.** **"I proclaimed a fast there, to seek of God a right way for us."** There was no foolhardiness in his courage; he was well aware of all the possible dangers on the road; and while he is confident of the Divine protection, he knows that, in his own quiet, matter-of-fact words, it is given "to all them that seek Him." So his faith not only impels him to the renunciation of the Babylonian guard, but to earnest supplication for the defence in which he is so confident. He is sure it will be given—so sure, that he will have no other shield; and yet he fasts and prays that he and his company may receive it. He prays because he is sure that he will receive it, and does receive it because he prays and is sure. So for us, the condition and preparation on and by which we are sheltered by that great hand is the faith that asks, and the asking of faith. We must forsake the earthly props, but we must also believingly desire to be upheld by the heavenly arms. We make God responsible for our safety when we abandon other defence, and commit ourselves to Him. With eyes open to our dangers, and full consciousness of our own unarmed and unwarlike weakness, let us solemnly commend ourselves to Him, rolling all our burden on His strong arms, knowing that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him. He will accept the trust, and set His guards about us. As the song of the re-

turning exiles, which may have been sung by the river Ahava, has it: "My help cometh from the Lord. The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand."

**22.** The symbolic phrase "the hand of our God," as expressive of the Divine protection, occurs with remarkable frequency in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and though not peculiar to them, is yet exceedingly characteristic of them. It has a certain beauty and force of its own. The hand is of course the seat of active power. It is on or over a man like some great shield held aloft above him, below which there is safe hiding. So that great hand bends itself over us, and we are secure beneath its hollow. God is upon us to impart power as well as protection; and our "bow abides in strength" when "the arms of our hands are made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." That was Ezra's faith, and that should be ours. A. M.

**31, 32.** "We departed." "We came." Thus it is that Ezra here relates the rest of his journey, the only thing worthy of note between Ahava and Jerusalem being this, that through "the good hand of God" upon the travellers they were kept in safety the whole way. This being acknowledged with a suitable note of thanksgiving, as something remarkable in such a journey, the story goes on to tell us of the first doings of the pilgrims after reaching the place which they had sought and thought of so long. P. C.

A flash of joyful feeling breaks through the simple narrative, as it tells how the words spoken before the king came true in the experience of the weaponless pilgrims: "The hand of our God *was* upon us, and He delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way; and we came to Jerusalem." It was no rash venture that we made. He was all that we hoped and asked. The ventures of faith are ever rewarded. We cannot set our expectations too high. What we dare scarcely hope now we shall one day remember. When we come to tell the completed story of our lives we shall have to record the fulfilment of all God's promises and the accomplishment of all our prayers that were built on these. Here let us cry, Be Thy hand upon us. Here let us trust, Thy hand shall be upon us. Then we shall have to say, "The hand of our God was upon us." And as we look from the watch-towers of the city on the desert that stretches to its very walls, and remember all the way by which He led us, we shall rejoice over His vindication of our poor faith, and praise Him that "not

one thing hath failed of all the things which the Lord our God spoke concerning us." A. M.

**32-36.** *Ezra's three days' rest at Jerusalem, and subsequent execution of the more pressing of the commissions intrusted to him.* After the fatigues of a four months' journey, a brief period of complete rest was well-nigh necessary. Like Nehemiah (Neh. 2:11), Ezra was content with a rest of three days. On the fourth he discharged himself of his commission to present to the Temple treasury the offerings of the Persian king, his counsellors and lords (verse 25), together with that spontaneously contributed by the Israelites who had accompanied him (chap. 7:16). This he did by appearing in person before the priests and Levites who were in charge of the Temple, and making over to them the entire offering of gold, silver and vessels which had been brought to Jerusalem from Babylon. At the same time the exiles whom he had induced to return, and whom he had conducted in safety through so long a journey, sacrificed on the altar of burnt offerings a number of bullocks, rams, lambs, and he-goats, as a token of their thankfulness to God for delivering them from the perils of the way. After this Ezra proceeded to make known to the satraps and other governors of the provinces lying west of the Euphrates the terms of the permanent commission which he had received from the king. The result was that these officials thenceforth helped the Jews instead of hindering them, and furnished the necessary supplies for the Temple service. P. C.

It was on the "first day of the fifth month" (7:9), in the burning heat of July, that Ezra with his company reached the holy city. They had been just four months upon their journey. The direct distance of Jerusalem from Babylon is not more than about five hundred and twenty miles, but the circuitous route pursued had almost doubled the length of the way. And long halts had no doubt been made at several places besides Ahava. The "king's commissions" had had to be delivered to the Persian satraps and subordinate governors to the west of the Euphrates. The result was that the average rate of progress had been little more than eight miles *per diem*, and four months had been consumed in travelling a distance that was usually accomplished in less than three.

**35.** As before, when Zerubbabel made his great sacrifice on the dedication of the second Temple, so now Ezra put prominently forward the idea that the returned exiles represented "all Israel," were the people of God in their totality—not a remnant of one tribe only es-

caped from barbarian masters, but the entire nation restored to their native land and planted there a second time, with full right and title to all the old privileges and promises attached to the "seed of Abraham." G. R.

. 35, 36. Having been conducted safely, by God's providence, to take up their abode in that place which He had chosen to put His name there, it was very fitting that they should openly declare their consecration to that name. This was represented by those "burnt offer-

ings" of which we are twice informed in this place. In so consecrating themselves, however, they only acted as a portion of that whole consecrated Israel of God to which they belonged. This identification of themselves with the covenant people they appear to have represented by their evidently studied reference in the number of animals offered to the appointed number of the covenant tribes. It is expressly said of the twelve bullocks that they were offered "for all Israel." P. C.

## Section 57.

### IDOLATROUS INTERMARRIAGES REBUKED AND ANNULLED.

EZRA 9 : 1-15 ; 10 : 1-44.

9 : 1 Now when these things were done, the princes drew near unto me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons ; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the peoples of the lands : yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the trespass of them of the captivity ; and I sat astonished until the evening oblation. And at the evening oblation I arose up from my humiliation, even with my garment and my mantle rent ; and I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God ; and I said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God : for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our guiltiness is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers we have been exceeding guilty unto this day ; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to spoiling, and to confusion of face, as it is this day. And now for a little moment grace hath been shewed from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are bondmen ; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what shall we say after this ? for we have forsaken thy commandments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land through the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, through their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their filthiness. Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their prosperity for ever : that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great guilt, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a remnant, shall we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the peoples that do these abominations ? wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should

15 be no remnant, nor any to escape? O LORD, the God of Israel, thou art righteous; for we are left a remnant that is escaped, as it is this day: behold, we are before thee in our guiltiness; for none can stand before thee because of this.

10:1 Now while Ezra prayed, and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there was gathered together unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have married strange women of the peoples of the land: yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise; for the matter belongeth unto thee, and we are with thee: be of good courage, and do it. Then arose Ezra, and made the chiefs of the priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they would do according to this word. So they sware. Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Jehohanan the son of Eliashib: and when he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the trespass of them of the captivity. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem; and that whosoever came not within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of the captivity. Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within the three days; it was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month: and all the people sat in the broad place before the house of God, trembling because of this matter, and for the great rain. And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have trespassed, and have married strange women, to increase the guilt of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the strange women. Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said concerning us, so must we do. But the people are many, and it is a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither is this a work of one day or two: for we have greatly transgressed in this matter. Let now our princes be appointed for all the congregation, and let all them that are in our cities which have married strange women come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God be turned from us, until this matter be despatched. Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahzeiah the son of Tikvah stood up against this matter: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, with certain heads of fathers' houses, after their fathers' houses, and all of them by their names, were separated; and they sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter. And they made an end with all the men that had married strange women by the first day of the first month. And among the sons of the priests there were found that had married strange women: namely, of the sons of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brethren, Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. And they gave their hand that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their guilt. And of the sons of Immer; Hanani and Zebadiah. And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uzziyah. And of the sons of Pashhur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethanel, Jozabad, and Elasaah. And of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah (the same is Kelita), Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. And of the singers; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri. And of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Izziah, and Malchijah, and Mijamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah. And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Elijah. And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. And of the 29 sons of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, Athlai. And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub, and Sheal, Jeremoth. And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezalel, and Binnui, and Manasseh. And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Isshijah, Malchijah, Shemaiah, Shimeon; Benjamin, Malluch, Shemariah. Of the sons of Hashum; Mattenai, Mattattah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, 34, 35, Manasseh, Shimei. Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel; Benaiah, Bedeiah, 36, 37, 38 Cheluhi; Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib; Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasu; and Bani, 39, 40 and Binnui, Shimei; and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah; Machnadebai, Shashai, 41, 42, 43 Sharai; Azarel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah; Shallum, Amariah, Joseph. Of the sons 44 of Nebo; Jciel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Iddo, and Joel, Benaiah. All these had taken strange wives: and some of them had wives by whom they had children.

IN the interval between Zerubbabel's rule and the coming of Ezra from Babylon with a special commission appointing him governor of Judea, the Jews seem to have been left without any strong controlling authority. The civil administration devolved upon a certain number of chiefs or "princes," who maintained order in Jerusalem, collected and remitted the tribute due to the Persian crown, and held courts to decide all causes, criminal and civil, in which only Jews were concerned. Tranquillity and order were sufficiently maintained in this way; but the governing power was weak, and in matters outside the range of the civil and criminal law men did pretty nearly "as it seemed good in their own eyes." During this interval of governmental debility, it appears that a fusion had begun between the Jews and the neighboring nations. Although the law of Moses distinctly forbade intermarriage between the people of God and the idolatrous nations whose land they had inherited, and by implication forbade such unions with any neighboring idolaters, the newly returned Israelites, perhaps not fully provided with women of their own nation and religion, had taken to themselves wives freely from the idolatrous tribes and nations in their vicinity. They had intermarried with the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Amorites, the Egyptians, and even with the remnant of the Canaanites. Not only had this been done by the common people, but "the hand of the princes and rulers" had been "chief in this trespass" (chap. 9:2). Nor had even the sacerdotal order kept itself pure. Priests and Levites, nay, the actual sons and nephews of the high-priest Jeshua himself, were guilty in the matter (chap. 10:18), had taken to themselves wives of the accursed races, and "mingled themselves with the people of the lands" (chap. 9:2). The danger to purity of religion was great. Those who married idolatrous wives were tempted, like Solomon, to connive at their introducing unhallowed rites into the holy city; while the issue of such marriages, influenced by their mothers, were apt to prefer heathenism to Judaism, and to fall away from the faith altogether. A fusion of the Jews with the Gentiles in Palestine at this time would have meant a complete obliteration of the Jews, who would have been absorbed and swallowed up in the far larger mass of the heathen without materially affecting it. Thus God's purpose in singling out a "peculiar people" would have been frustrated, and the world left without a regenerating element. Considerations of this kind help us to understand the horror of

Ezra when he understood what had taken place (chaps. 9:3-6; 10:1), and enable us to estimate at its right value the zeal that he displayed in putting down the existing practice and establishing a better order of things. His task was lightened to him by the fact that a large religious and patriotic party rallied to him, and associated itself with his reforms; a party including many of the princes and elders (chaps. 9:1; 10:8), and no doubt a certain number of the priests. He effected his reform by means of a commission of laymen (chap. 10:16), which in the space of little more than three months inquired into all the suspected cases, and compelled every person who had married an idolatrous wife to divorce her, and send her back, with any children that she had borne him, to her own people. Thus, *for the time*, the corruption was effectually checked, the evil rooted out and removed. We shall find, however, in Nehemiah, that it recurred (Neh. 13:23), in combination with various other abuses, and had to be once more resisted and repressed by the civil power (*ibid.*, verse 30).

This section is divisible into ten parts 1. The complaint made by the princes to Ezra concerning the mixed marriages (chap. 9:1, 2). 2. Ezra's astonishment and horror (verses 3, 4). 3. His confession and prayer to God (verses 5-15). 4. Repentance of the people, and covenant sworn to, on the recommendation of Shechaniah (chap. 10:1-5). 5. Ezra's fast (verse 6). 6. Proclamation summoning all the Jews to Jerusalem (verses 7-9). 7. Address of Ezra, and consent of the people to put away the strange wives (verses 10-14). 8. Opposition of Jonathan and others (verse 15). 9. Accomplishment of the work (verses 16, 17). 10. Names of those who had married strange wives (verses 18-44).

**9:1, 2.** *Complaint of the princes to Ezra.* It is remarkable that complaint on a matter of religious transgression should have come from the secular and not from the ecclesiastical authorities of the city. But sons and nephews of Jeshua the high-priest were among those who had married idolatrous wives (10:18). By God's good providence, however, it often happens that when things have come to this pass, and the priestly order is hopelessly corrupt, godly princes are raised up to take in hand religious reforms and carry them to a successful issue.

**3, 4.** *Ezra's astonishment and horror.* In Babylonia, whence Ezra had come, the inclination to intermarry with the heathen had not, it would seem, shown itself. Exiles in a foreign land naturally cling to each other under their

adverse circumstances, and, moreover, being despised by those among whom they sojourn, are not readily accepted by them into social fellowship, much less into affinity and alliance. Thus the thing was to Ezra a new thing. His familiarity with the Law, and, perhaps we may add, his insight into the grounds upon which the Law upon this point was founded, caused him to view the matter as one of the gravest kind, and to feel shocked and horror-struck at what was told him respecting it. P. C.

This thing was ominous, because : 1. It betrayed want of faith in God, mistrust of His protection when His people sought to strengthen themselves by alliances with the heathen. 2. It transgressed an express command of God in De. 7 : 3, 4. 3. It paved the way for a relapse into idolatry. In this manner was the wise King Solomon beguiled to folly ; and by this familiarity with the worshippers, and then with the worship of strange gods, were the kingdoms of Israel and Judah corrupted and overthrown. So Ezra sat astonished. It seemed as if the nation had quite forgotten its history, and that all its affliction and captivity had left it no wiser than before. D. F.

**5-15. Ezra's confession and prayer to God.** The most remarkable feature of Ezra's confession is the thoroughness with which he identifies himself with his erring countrymen, blushes for their transgressions, and is ashamed for their misconduct. All their sins he appears to consider as his sins, all their disobedience as his disobedience, all their perils as his perils. Another striking feature is his sense of the exceeding sinfulness of the particular sin of the time (see verses 6, 7, 10). He views it as a "great trespass"—one that "is grown up into the heavens"—which is equivalent to a complete forsaking of God's commandments, and on account of which he and his people "cannot stand before" God. This feeling seems based partly on the nature of the sin itself (verse 14), but also, and in an especial way, on a strong sense of the ingratitude shown by the people in turning from God so soon after He had forgiven their former sins against Him, and allowed them to return from the Captivity, rebuild the Temple, and re-establish themselves as a nation. If after their deliverance they again fell away, the sin could not but be unpardonable ; and the punishment to be expected was a final uprooting and destruction from which there could be no recovery (verses 13, 14). P. C.

The address itself is not properly to be called a *prayer*, for there is not a word of petition in it ; but if we give prayer its full latitude it is

the offering up of devout affections to God—and very devout are the affections which Ezra here expresses. His address is a penitent confession of sin, not his own (from a conscience burdened with its own guilt and apprehensive of its own danger), but the sin of his people, from a gracious concern for the honor of God and the welfare of Israel. Here is a lively picture of ingenuous repentance. H.—Sinning times have ever been the saints' praying times ; this sent Ezra with a heavy heart to confess the sin of his people, and to bewail their abominations before the Lord. And Jeremiah tells the wicked of his degenerate age that "his soul should weep in secret places for their pride" (18 : 17). Indeed, sometimes sin comes to such a height that this is almost all the godly can do, to get into a corner and bewail the general pollutions of the age. When it is thus with a people, *what can the righteous do?* Yes, this they may and should do—"fast and pray." There is yet a God in heaven to be sought to, when a people's deliverance is thrown beyond the help of human policy or power. Now is the fit time to make their appeal to God. *W. Gurnall.*

**7. Since the days of our fathers.** Very similar in tone to this are the confessions of Nehemiah (Neh. 9 : 29-35) and of Daniel (Dan. 9 : 5-11). The Captivity had done its work by deeply convincing of sin the nation that had been proud and self-righteous previously.

**8. For a little space.** The "little space" was above sixty years, counting from the second of Darius (chap. 4 : 24), or about eighty, counting from the first of Cyrus (chap. 1 : 1). But this does not seem to Ezra much in the life of a nation. B. C.

**13, 14. After all that is come upon us.** After the punishments that we have suffered, the loss of our independence, of our temple and our city, the long and weary period of captivity and servitude in a foreign land, which should have bent our stubborn spirits to obedience ; and after the mercy shown us in the fact that Thou *hast punished us less than our iniquities deserved, and given us a deliverance*, or, rather, a residue, *such as this*, which should have stirred us up to gratitude and love, *should we again break Thy commandments*, and fall away, what can we expect but final abandonment, complete and entire destruction ? If neither severity nor kindness avail anything, what can God do more ? Must He not view our case as hopeless, and so make an end of us altogether ? P. C.

If we were all good in our carriage toward God, we might presume that God would be all good in His providence toward us; and that if our obedience were uniform, even and uninterrupted, that our prosperity would be so too. But, alas! it is quite otherwise. Many, very many, have been our days of sin, and therefore we have no reason at all to complain if we see some days of sorrow. And shall we grumble at a little sorrow that have so much sin? Rather let us bless God, who has spared us so much and punished us so little, and confess the truth with Ezra: "Thou, O Lord, hast punished us less, far less, than our iniquities deserve." *Bp. Bull.*

**10:1-5.** *Repentance of the people, and covenant sworn to, on the recommendation of Shechaniah.* While Ezra was uttering his prayer aloud, upon his knees, in front of the Temple, where the evening sacrifice was being offered upon the great brazen altar, the people gathered about him, heard what he said, and had their feelings so stirred that numbers of them burst into tears and "wept very sore." When he had ended, Shechaniah, the son of Jehiel (one of those who had married an idolatrous wife—verse 26), took the word, and suggested an immediate step toward reformation. This was that all present should at once enter into a special covenant with God that they would do their utmost to have the mixed marriages dissolved, and the idolatrous wives, with their children, sent out of the country. The proposition of Shechaniah approved itself to Ezra, who "arose, and made the chief priests and Levites" present and "all the people" present swear to this covenant. "And they swore." An engagement of a most sacred character was thus entered into by a number of influential persons, and the way was prepared for the actual reformation which followed. P. C.

**3. Let us make a covenant.** Voluntary covenants, explicit renewals of the standing covenant between God and His people, are frequent in the history of the Jews. (See 2 Chron. 15:12; 29:10; 34:31, 32; Neh. 10:29.) Men stirred themselves up by these means to a greater zeal and strictness than they would have been equal to otherwise. **To put away all the wives.** The facility of divorce among the Jews is well known. According to many of the rabbis, a bill of divorcement might be given by the husband for the most trivial cause. Thus no legal difficulty stood in the way of Shechaniah's proposition; and Ezra regarded it as necessary for the moral and religious welfare of the people. **Let it**

**be done according to the Law—i.e.,** let a formal "bill of divorcement" be given to each foreign wife, whereby she will be restored to the condition of an unmarried woman, and be free to wed another husband. (See De. 24:1, 2.) G. R.—This entire proposition of the layman Shechaniah indicates familiarity with the Law of Moses as of long standing and force, and furnishes one of many similar disproofs of a then recent origin of that law. And this testimony is confirmed by almost every detail of the history recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. B.

**7-9.** *Proclamation made, summoning all the Jews to Jerusalem.* After due deliberation between Ezra, the princes, and the elders, it was resolved first to summon all those who had returned from the Captivity—whether they were Jews or Israelites—to Jerusalem, in order that the decision come to with respect to the mixed marriages might be communicated to them. A limit of three days was fixed, and absentees were threatened with the heavy penalties of excommunication and forfeiture of all their possessions. Proclamation having been made to this effect "throughout Judah" (verse 7), there was a gathering of all the males of full age to Jerusalem within the prescribed time. The place of meeting was the great court of the Temple (verse 9). According to Hecataeus, of Abdera (Fr. 14), this was "a stone-walled enclosure, about five hundred feet long and one hundred and fifty feet wide," which might perhaps afford sitting room for twenty thousand men. Deducting the aged and infirm, the sick, and those between twelve and twenty years of age, the country Jews would scarcely have reached this number. P. C.

**8. Within three days.** The limits of Judea at this time appear to have been Bethel on the north, Beersheba on the south, Jericho on the east, and the Mediterranean upon the west. As the frontier was nowhere much more than forty miles from Jerusalem, three days from the day that they heard the proclamation would be sufficient time to allow all the able-bodied men to reach the capital.

**10-14.** *Address of Ezra, and consent of the people to put away the strange wives.* Ezra came forward boldly, denouncing the sin committed, and as supreme governor commanding the repudiation of the strange wives. The assembled multitude consented, but urged that the matter required time; that the season was unsuitable for a prolonged stay of the whole body of country Jews at Jerusalem, and that the business would be most conveniently carried through

by a standing commission consisting of the chief authorities of the city of Jerusalem, who should take the case of each country town separately, and, in conjunction with the elders and judges of each town, investigate the alleged mixed marriages of each locality, and adjudge upon them.

**16, 17.** *Settlement of the whole matter by the repudiation of the strange wives.* The great assembly had been held on the twentieth day of the ninth month. On the first day of the tenth month, little more than a week later, the commission for examining into the matter met under the presidency of Ezra, and commenced proceedings. The case of each city was taken separately. Its male inhabitants of full age attended, and its "elders" and "judges" sat on the commission as assessors while the conjugal position of their townfolk was being investigated. Where a "mixed marriage" was proved the wife was repudiated. In one hundred and twelve cases the necessity of repudiation was made out to the satisfaction of the commission, and this number of wives was put away. On the whole, the small extent to which the evil had prevailed is remarkable; for one hundred and twelve mixed marriages in a population where the adult males were about forty thousand would give only one such marriage to three hundred or three hundred and fifty legitimate ones. Ezra is to be commended for having perceived the greatness of the peril, and for having taken prompt and decided measures to check it, without waiting till it had got to a head, and so become uncontrollable.

**16.** "They sat down to examine this matter" as men who felt how long and arduous a task they had on their hands, and who wished, therefore, to give to it their undivided attention and care. We see the same spirit in the long continuance and perseverance of their work. It took them three months to "make an end" of the examination; but it was a full end when they did. And we see it also in the impartiality and thoroughness of their work. Whosoever had offended, whether priests (verses 20-22), or Levites (verse 23), or singers (verse 24), or porters (verse 24 again), or lay members of the house of Israel; and however difficult and painful in some cases the circum-

stances might be (end of verse 44), there was but one measure for all. This, indeed, is what makes this catalogue here a fit conclusion to the whole. This apparently unnecessary list of names had great value in its day. It was the formal "report," so to speak, of Ezra and his brother "commissioners," the final proof of their care. That "report" being presented, the "commission" ceased to exist.

**18-44.** *The names of those who had married the strange wives.* Aware of the danger that the nation might relapse into the sin which he was seeking to root out, Ezra punishes the wrong-doers by placing their names on record, that others might fear to do the like. He assigns the first place in his catalogue of offenders to the priests, doubtless because in them the sin was greatest; they, as the special custodians of the Law, were most bound to have observed the Law. Next to the priests he puts the Levites, on the same principle, because of their semi-sacerdotal character. He then concludes with the laymen, arranged under their several families. By the list of laymen it appears that ten only out of some thirty-six lay families were implicated in the sin. Three of the four priestly families, on the other hand, and even the near kindred of the high priest, were among the guilty. It is remarkable that it is Ezra, a priest, and one by many accused of over-sacerdotalism, who gives this testimony against his own order. P. C.

**44. All these.** The guilty persons were, it would seem, one hundred and thirteen in number. They comprised four members of the high priest's family, thirteen other priests, ten Levites and eighty-six lay Israelites belonging to at least ten distinct families. B. C.

At this point the narrative stops, and the events of the next twelve years are passed over in silence, after which the story opens again with the first chapter of Nehemiah. W. J. B. —It seems probable that Ezra, soon after he had succeeded in effecting his reform, was either recalled by Artaxerxes to the court, or returned of his own accord to make the report, which he had been commissioned to make (chap. 7:14), on the general condition of the Palestinian province. G. R.



# BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

## Section 58.

THIS is, with the exception of Malachi, the very latest book in the Old Testament. Ezra has told us of the restoration of the Temple and Divine worship after the return from captivity. Nehemiah relates the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem with its walls and gates, and the re-establishment of the Jews in their land. The throne of David was not set up again. Both as respects their liberty to worship in a temple, and as respects their civil condition and the restoration of their capital, the Jews continued under the power of the Gentiles. So were they destined to be, till the coming of the Messiah, separate from other nations, but dependent successively on the Persians, Macedonians, Egyptians, Syrians and Romans. D. F.

The Book of Nehemiah is, in the main, a personal narrative, containing an account of Nehemiah himself, and of certain proceedings in which he was engaged, between the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus (or B. C. 444) and his thirty-second or thirty-third year (B. C. 432-1). It is a natural sequel to the Book of Ezra, with which it has always been united in the Jewish canon, though recognized as a "second part" of the Book. The principal object of the writer is to describe the circumstances attending the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem in B. C. 444, and its dedication, some years later, with great pomp and ceremony. To explain the part which he himself took in these transactions, he has to preface his account with a purely personal sketch, descriptive of the circumstances under which he became engaged in the work as its director and superintendent. This sketch occupies the first two chapters. The main narrative then commences, and is carried on uninterruptedly to the fifth verse of chap. 7, when it is broken in upon by the introduction of a list, identical (or nearly so) with one given by Ezra in the second chapter of his Book—a list of the families which returned from the Babylonian captivity under Zerubbabel, with the number of each family,

and the names of the principal chiefs. This occupies chap. 7 from verse 6 to the end. The narrative is then resumed, and continued through three chapters (chaps. 8-10), the principal subject-matter in this part being the religious instruction of the people, their celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the voluntary covenant with Almighty God into which they entered, by the advice of the Levites. After this the sequence of the history is again interrupted—this time by the insertion of six distinct and independent lists, which occupy a chapter and a half (chaps. 11 and 12 : 1-26). The dedication of the wall is then related (chap. 12 : 27-43). In conclusion, an account is given of certain religious arrangements and reforms which Nehemiah effected (chaps. 12 : 44-47, and chap. 13). P. C.

The whole narrative gives us a graphic and interesting account of the state of Jerusalem and the returned captives in the writer's times, and incidentally, of the nature of the Persian government and the condition of its remote provinces. The documents appended to it also give some further information as to the times of Zerubbabel on the one hand, and as to the continuation of the genealogical registers and the succession of the high-priesthood to the close of the Persian empire on the other. The view given of the rise of two factions among the Jews—the one the strict religious party; the other, the gentilizing party, sets before us the germ of much that we meet with in a more developed state in later Jewish history. Again, in this history, as well as in Ezra, we see the bitter enmity between the Jews and Samaritans acquiring strength and definitive form on both religious and political grounds. The book also throws much light upon the domestic institutions of the Jews. Some of its details give us incidentally information of great historical importance. The account of the building and dedication of the wall contains the most valuable materials for settling the topography of

Jerusalem to be found in Scripture. The list of returned captives who came under different leaders from the time of Zerubbabel to that of Nehemiah (amounting in all to only 42,360 adult males and 7337 servants), which is given in chap. 7, conveys a faithful picture of the political weakness of the Jewish nation as compared with the times when Judah alone numbered 470,000 fighting men (1 Chron. 21 : 5). It is an important aid, too, in understanding the subsequent history and appreciating the patriotism and valor by which they attained their independence under the Maccabees. The lists of leaders, priests, Levites, and of those who signed the covenant, reveal incidentally much of the national spirit as well as of the social habits of the captives, derived from older times. Thus the fact that *twelve* leaders are named in Neh. 7 : 7 indicates the feeling of the captives that they represented the *twelve* tribes, a feeling further evidenced in the expression, "the men of the people of Israel." The enumeration of twenty-one and twenty-two, or, if Zidkijah stands for the head of the house of Zadok, twenty-three chief priests in 10 : 1-8 ; 12 : 1-7, of whom nine bear the names of those who were heads of courses in David's time, shows how, even in their wasted and reduced numbers, they struggled to preserve these ancient institutions, and also supplies the reason of the mention of these particular twenty-two or twenty-three names. But it does more than this. Taken in conjunction with the list of those who sealed (Neh. 10 : 1-27), it proves the existence of a social custom of calling chiefs by the name of the clan or house of which they were chiefs. Other miscellaneous information contained in this Book embraces the hereditary crafts practised by certain priestly families—*e.g.*, the apothecaries or makers of the sacred ointments and incense, and the goldsmiths, whose business it probably was to repair the sacred vessels (8 : 8) ; the situation of the garden of the kings of Judah by which Zedekiah escaped, as seen Neh. 3 : 15 ; statistics, etc. The only real historical difficulty in the narrative is to determine the time of the dedication of the wall, whether in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes or before. *Dis. B.*

We may fairly regard the Book of Nehemiah as a substantive work, a work having a real, and not merely an artificial, separateness ; though perhaps the same hand which constructed it may have attached it to the previously existing Book of Ezra, which treated of nearly the same period.

The book comprises four portions :

The first seven chapters contain a consecutive narrative, written in a uniform style by Nehemiah himself, as even the most sceptical critics allow. The first person singular is used, when Nehemiah is spoken of, throughout. The events related cover a space of (probably) less than a year. The record, however, does not belong to the exact time of the events, but has been composed at least twelve years later, since, while the general narrative falls into the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (or B.C. 445-444), in one place (chap. 5 : 14), the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (or B.C. 433-432) is mentioned.

The second portion of the work consists of three chapters (chaps. 8-10), and contains a narrative of some events belonging to the autumn of B.C. 444. In this portion Nehemiah is spoken of in the third person ; he is called "the Tirshatha," whereas in the earlier chapters his title is always *pechah* ; moreover he is thrown, comparatively speaking, into the background, his place being taken by Ezra, who holds the first and most prominent position. From the general character of the language employed, from the minuteness of the descriptions, and especially from the use of the first person in chap. 10 : 29-39, we are justified in regarding this portion as the work of an eyewitness, a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The third portion of the work extends from the beginning of chap. 11 to the 26th verse of chap. 12. This consists of six important lists : (1) a list of the dwellers in Jerusalem and of their chief officers in Nehemiah's time (chap. 11 : 1-24) ; (2) a list of the country towns occupied by the returned Israelites at the same period (25-36) ; (3) a list of the priestly and Levitical families that returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel (chap. 12 : 1-9) ; (4) a list of high-priests from Jeshua to Jaddua, or from B.C. 538 to B.C. 336 (10, 11) ; (5) a list of the actual heads of the priestly families under the high-priest Joiakim (verses 12-21) ; (6) chief families of Levites (verses 24-26).

The fourth and last section of the book comprises chap. 12, from verse 27 to the end, and the whole of chap. 13. This section contains an account of the dedication of the wall, and of certain reforms which Nehemiah effected after his return from Babylon in B.C. 432-431. It is allowed on all hands to be, in the main, the work of Nehemiah ; and there are no valid grounds for questioning his authorship of the entire section. The first person is used in chap. 11 : 31 and 40, and in chap. 13 : 6 sqq. The entire passage possesses the characteristics of

Nehemiah's style and manner; the *nexus* of the whole is satisfactory; and it is a pedantic hypercriticism which thinks to discover in this short and consecutive narrative the intrusion of "pieces" by a later hand, or the "over-writing" of a reviser. There is every reason to believe that the last section of "Nehemiah" is, like the first, a memoir from the hand of that personage—a memoir written soon after the events—probably in B.C. 431 or 430.

The moderate tone of the entire account, the admission of a state of weakness which stands in remarkable contrast with both the earlier and the later glories of the nation, and the record of sins and shortcomings, which an uncanon narrator would have concealed, have induced even the most captious of commentators to allow that, in this book, as in that of Ezra, we have a plain unvarnished narrative. The fact that the bulk of the history is from the pen of an eye-witness, and of one especially qualified to narrate the events of his time, being beyond dispute, it is impossible to deny that the highest degree of historical credibility attaches to the work, considered even under its merely human aspect. Thus it is unnecessary to enlarge on the authenticity of this book, which no writer entitled to consideration has called in question. B. C.

The main work which Nehemiah had set himself to do was accomplished within six months of the day that he obtained his commission from Artaxerxes. His administration during the remainder of the time that he governed Judea, which was certainly not less than thirteen years, was characterized by the same vigor, promptness, and energy which had marked its opening months. It was also remarkable for the consideration which he showed for those under his rule, and for the noble hospitality which he dispensed both toward natives and toward foreigners (5 : 14-18). He augmented the population of Jerusalem, too scanty for the size of its walls, by bringing men in from the country districts (11 : 1); redeemed large numbers of Jews, who had been sold into slavery among the heathen, and restored them to their native land (5 : 8); put an end to a system of borrowing money upon mortgage, or raising it by selling sons and daughters into servitude, which was reducing the lower class of Jews to the condition of the poor Roman plebeians of the early commonwealth (5 : 1-13; 10 : 31); restored the strict observance of the Sabbath, and of the sabbatical year (10 : 31; 13 : 15-22); established the annual payment of one third of a shekel by each adult male toward the Temple

service and fabric (10 : 32), together with a system for supplying the wood necessary for the sacrifices (verse 34); prevented the Temple from being polluted by the heathen, and profaned by being used for secular purposes (13 : 4-9); enforced the payment of tithes, which was falling into disuse (10 : 37; 13 : 10-13); and, like Ezra, compelled all those who had married foreign wives to divorce them, and send them back, with their children, to their own people (13 : 1-3 and 28-28). His efforts to effect these reforms were thwarted and resisted by an important party among the priests and nobles, which leaned toward secularism, was addicted to intermarriage with the heathen, and desirous of fusion with the surrounding nations. An ordinary man might have shrunk from affronting the views of a party so strong and so powerful, one supported by neighboring princes, and upheld at Jerusalem by the high-priest of the time, Eliashib. Nehemiah set himself to "contend with the rulers" (13 : 11) and the "nobles" (verse 17); "chased from him" the grandson of the high-priest (verse 28); "cursed," or at any rate "reviled," those who had married the foreign wives, and even "smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair" (verse 25). When Eliashib himself, the natural guardian of the Temple, disregarding its sacredness, assigned one of the chambers within its precincts to Tobiah, the Ammonite, who furnished it and made it into a residence, Nehemiah of his own authority turned all the furniture out of doors (verse 8). Strict, zealous, prompt, uncompromising, he would allow no relaxation of the old law, no departure from primitive custom, no consorting with foreigners. Not only did he re-establish the walls of Jerusalem on their ancient foundations, but he built up the state too on the old lines, "supplementing and completing the work of Ezra," and giving it "internal cohesion and permanence." P. C.

A minor point, which lends a peculiar interest to Nehemiah, is its fulness of topographical detail. In inquiries concerning the ancient city, its site, walls, towers, gates, and principal buildings, the third and twelfth chapters are simply invaluable. For copiousness, for exactness, for authority these chapters transcend all the other notices that have come down to us with respect to *ancient Jerusalem*; and the possibility of recovering the general plan of the place rests almost entirely upon Nehemiah's descriptions.

The Book of Nehemiah is invaluable for the lesson it teaches, that when the Church of God

is at the lowest, it will still be protected by His Almighty hand, will be enabled to triumph over the malice of its external enemies, and will be purged and purified from the internal corruptions which endanger it far more than any hostility *ab extra*. It must have greatly helped to encourage and sustain the nation during the terrible times of the Ptolemaic and Syrian persecutions; and it may with advantage be read and pondered on by Christians, at all periods when the power of the world is put forth to crush or overlay the faith. That Judaism rallied from the weak and seemingly moribund condition described by Nehemiah, became once more a power in the world, strong enough to confront heathen Rome and wage a desperate struggle with the entire force of the empire, is one of the most remarkable of the facts of history, and should never be forgotten by the Christian community in times of depression and danger. G. R.

#### THE MAN, NEHEMIAH.

The probable birthplace and almost certainly the scene of the early life of Nehemiah, was the great Persian, or rather, Elamitic, city of Susa (see Esther, chap. 1). The circumstances of his birth and bringing up we do not know; but we may assume perhaps from the high position whereto he ultimately attained, and from his evident fitness for it, that he belonged to the upper class of the community, received the ordinary education of a Jew of that class, and even before he became attached to the Persian court held an honorable place among his countrymen. G. R.

He was no prophet—he was no priest—he made no pretension to possessing a Divine commission, but he was a devout, resolute, sagacious man, with the fear of God in his soul and Jerusalem graven on his inmost heart! Prompt and practical and with a strong dash of organizing, governmental instinct, there was yet a vein of poetry in him. He was bold and cautious, prudent yet daring, full of ready resource, able to hold his tongue and bide his time; and deep down below all this there was a great fountain of enthusiasm, which was called forth by the thoughts of God and of His land lying in desolation and ruin. A. M.

His sagacity and courage were markedly shown in the arrangements by which he carried through the rebuilding of the wall, and balked the cunning plans of the "adversaries." His deeply religious spirit and constant sense of communion with and absolute dependence upon God are strikingly exhibited, first, in the

long prayer recorded in chap. 1:5-11; and secondly, and most remarkably, in what have been called his "interjectional prayers"—those short but moving addresses to Almighty God which occur so frequently in his writings—the instinctive outpouring of a heart deeply moved, but ever resting itself upon God, and looking to God alone for aid in trouble, for the frustration of evil designs, and for final reward and acceptance. At the same time, there is no fanaticism in his religion; while trusting in God for the issue, he omits no necessary precaution. "Nevertheless," he says, "we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night" (chap. 4:9). Nor does he trust to faith alone, without works. He is self-denying, hospitable, active in deeds of mercy, un-resting, indefatigable. P. C.

Nehemiah was a man of the good old stamp of Joshua and Caleb—faithful, pious, patriotic, brave. But he raised no standard against the Gentiles. Having understanding of the times, he was content to re-establish the Jews on their own soil, under the protection of the great Persian empire; and he did secure for them that position which, under one or another Gentile protector, they were to hold till the coming of Christ. He grew up with reverence for Jehovah, Israel's God, musing on His promises, grieving over the unfaithfulness that had incurred the Captivity, hearing with eagerness of the progress of those Jews who returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua, and longing to take some part in the restoration of the holy city. As a young man, he was exposed to temptation, for he held a place of honor in the Persian court, at the magnificent palace of Shushan. But God kept him in the hour and place of temptation, and nursed within him a heroic national spirit. Like Moses in the court of Pharaoh, he never forgot that he was of the stock of Israel, and that he was deeply affected when he heard of the depressed condition of the settlement at Jerusalem. D. F.

On reviewing the character of Nehemiah, we seem unable to find a single fault to counterbalance his many and great virtues. For pure and disinterested patriotism he stands unrivalled. Every act of his during his government bespeaks one who had no selfishness in his nature. All he did was noble, generous, high-minded, courageous and to the highest degree upright. But to stern integrity he united great humility and kindness and a princely hospitality. As a statesman, he combined forethought, prudence and sagacity in counsel, with vigor, promptitude and decision

in action. In dealing with the enemies of his country, he was wary, penetrating and bold. In directing the internal economy of the state he took a comprehensive view of the real welfare of the people, and adopted the measures best calculated to promote it. In dealing, whether with friend or foe, he was utterly free from favor or fear, conspicuous for the simplicity with which he aimed only at doing what was right, without respect of persons. But in nothing was he more remarkable than for his piety, and the singleness of eye with which he walked before God. He seems to have undertaken everything in dependence upon God, with prayer for His guidance and blessing, and to have sought his reward only from God. *Bp. Hervey.*

*His Pure, Broad, Intense, Exalted Patriotism.*

*Because* his people were down-trodden, *because* the were "in great affliction and reproach," with the wall of their city "broken down," and the gates "burned with fire," *because* they were "feeble," and despised, and poor, and ground-down, and oppressed, therefore his heart clave to them, and he was drawn by the cords of love to cast in his lot with theirs, to throw up a position of ease, wealth and dignity, and exchange it for one of ceaseless toil, of no small danger, and of exposure to scorn and reproach. The deep sympathy with the men of his race which inspires the true patriot is unmistakably shown in the mourning and weeping and fasting for days and weeks, when he first heard of their distress; in the earnest prayer in which he associated himself, and "His father's house," with the transgressors who had brought down God's judgments upon the nation; in the "sorrow of heart" which made his countenance sad, and could not be concealed from the great king; in the silent, almost solitary, ride for the purpose of exploring the ruins; in the mournful words to the nobles, "Ye see the distress we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste;" and again in the indignant address to the enemies of Judah—"We, His servants, will arise and build; but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." What a patriotic fire burns in the prayer—"Hear, O our God, for we are despised; and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity; and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee, for they have provoked Thee to anger before the builders" (4: 4, 5). How deep the fellow-feeling which resounds in the battle-cry—"Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great and terrible; and fight

for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives, and your houses" (verse 14). Well does Nehemiah, in one of his short characteristic prayers, exclaim—"Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people" (5: 19). What had he not done for them? Bold to intercede for them with the king, prompt to hasten to their aid across a vast stretch of arid and dangerous country, clever to design and bold to execute the first great necessary work—the building of the city walls, stern to repel unauthorized intermeddlers with his doings, indefatigable in labor, skilful in organization, quite ready to meet force with force, and at the same time tender-hearted, deeply touched by the sufferings of the poor (5: 1-18) and bent on alleviating them, within a few months of his arrival in the city he had secured the capital against sudden assault, removed the nation's "reproach," baffled and outwitted its enemies, and at the same time found a remedy for the worst internal troubles, put down the oppression of the rich, and relieved the misery of the indigent. Few patriots have ever succeeded in doing so much in so short a time. And as his course began, so it continued. A single-eyed, unselfish regard for his people's best interests actuated him from first to last, whether the immediate danger to be met was defencelessness, or alienation of class from class, or general poverty, or the casting aside of wholesome restraints, or the insidious peril of gradual amalgamation with the heathen.

Very conspicuous and very admirable are his *activity* and *energy*. Considering how most men love their ease, and how prone the Oriental man is, above all others, to be sluggish and apathetic, remembering, moreover, that Nehemiah was brought up in the purlieu of a court characterized by a luxury and self-indulgence rarely equalled elsewhere, and never surpassed, it is most remarkable that he should have shown himself so notable an example of activity and devotion to work. His *physical courage*, too, is strongly marked in the entire account which he gives (chap. 4) of the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. In the position which he occupied, as a civilian and not a professional soldier, and as the governor of a province not a military commandant, there was no call upon him to expose his person when an attack was threatened, much less to be ever placing himself in the forefront of peril. But he will allow himself no such immunity. He takes his position with the armed force, wherever there seems to be the greatest danger; he

marshals the men at his disposal personally (verse 13); he moves from place to place, and takes his trumpeter with him, to summon aid where it may be most wanted (verses 18-20); he is there, watching, commanding, encouraging, overseeing, night and day, and scarcely takes off his clothes while the peril continues (verse 23). Such courage is unusual even in a commander who is a trained soldier; in Nehemiah, the royal favorite, the dainty courtier, the "cup-bearer," it is astonishing.

Nor does his *moral courage* fall short of his physical. Considerable moral courage was shown when, notwithstanding that he "was sore afraid" (2:2), he made his request for leave of absence of the king (*ibid.*, verse 5). Still more was exhibited, when to the scornful and spiteful words of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem—"What is this thing that ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?" (verse 19), he answered, "The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem" (verse 20). As bold and fearless was the rejoinder, when for the second time the same Sanballat brought forward the same accusation—"There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart" (6:8). To beard the high-priest within his own stronghold, the Temple, was a most daring and hazardous act (13:7, 8); to banish his grandson, and "chase" him out of the country, required almost as much firmness and resolution (*ibid.*, verse 28). In enforcing the observance of the Sabbath, and dissolving the mixed marriages, and ejecting the heathen wives, perhaps even

more moral courage was shown (verses 3, 17-22, 25-28), inasmuch as those acts ran counter to a spurious sentimentalism, which had taken a strong hold of some sections of the community.

Nehemiah's unselfishness, liberality and generous hospitality stand out in strong relief when we compare him with the general run of Oriental governors. For twelve years at least, perhaps for many more, he ruled his province without exacting a farthing of revenue for his own use from those who were under his government. He collected and remitted the royal tribute, but he took nothing for himself, whether in money or kind (5:14, 15). He must have supported his court entirely out of his own private means. When we consider what enormous gains governors commonly made under the Persian system, how lavish was their expenditure, and yet what fortunes they accumulated, we cannot but view with astonishment and admiration the one man who, occupying this position, declines to get any advantage from it, and impoverishes, instead of enriching, himself by his office. G. R.

In my esteem, Ezra, the scribe, and Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, though neither of them ever wore a crown, commanded an army, conquered any country or were famed for philosophy or oratory, yet both of them, being pious, praying men and very serviceable in their day to the Church of God and the interests of religion, were really greater men and more honorable, not only than any of the Roman consuls or dictators, but than Xenophon, or Demosthenes, or Plato himself, who lived at the same time, the bright ornaments of Greece. H.

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## Section 59.

### NEHEMIAH'S PETITION, COMMISSION, JOURNEY, AND ARRIVAL AT JERUSALEM.

NEHEMIAH 1:1-11; 2:1-11.

**1:1** THE words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men out of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and I fasted and

5 prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O LORD, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep  
6 his commandments : let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which  
7 we have sinned against thee : yea, I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judge-  
8 ments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad  
9 among the peoples : but if ye return unto me, and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from  
10 thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to cause my name to dwell there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great  
11 power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name : and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. (Now I was cupbearer to the king.)

2 : 1 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, when wine was before him, that I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence. And the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick ? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very  
3 sore afraid. And I said unto the king, Let the king live for ever : why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates  
4 thereof are consumed with fire ? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request ? So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, If it please the  
5 king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto  
6 me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be ? and when wilt thou return ? So it pleased the king to send me ; and I set him a time. Moreover I said unto  
7 the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may let me pass through till I come unto Judah ; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of  
8 the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the castle which appertaineth to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.  
9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the  
10 king had sent with me captains of the army and horsemen. And when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, for  
11 that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

**Chaps. 1, 2 : 1-8.** *Circumstances under which Nehemiah obtained his commission to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.* Living at the Persian court, far from the land which he looked on as his true country, Nehemiah seems to have known but little of its condition and circumstances. Some event called his brother Hanani to Jerusalem ; and on his return to Susa this brother gave him a description of the dismantled state of the holy city, and the "affliction and reproach" of the inhabitants consequent thereupon, which threw him into a paroxysm of grief. In his own words, he "sat down and wept, and mourned for days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (chap. 1 : 4). It was the month Nisan, which followed the vernal equinox, the first of the Jewish year,

when Artaxerxes, observing the sadness of his attendant, inquired its cause. Nehemiah revealed it, and the king further inquired, "For what dost thou make request ?" This was the origin of Nehemiah's commission. He asked and obtained permission to quit the court for a definite time (verse 6), and to go to Jerusalem with authority to "build" the city. This was understood to include the repair of the governor's house, of the fortress which commanded the Temple area, and of the city wall (verse 8). It necessarily involved Nehemiah's appointment as governor, and the notification of this appointment to the existing satraps and pashas. Leave was also given him to cut such timber as was needed for the work in the "king's forest" or "park" a royal domain situated in the neigh-

borhood of Jerusalem. Nehemiah, having obtained this firman, left Susa early in the spring of B.C. 444, accompanied by an escort of Persian troops (verse 9), and reached Jerusalem in safety, having on his way communicated his appointment to the officials of the Syrian province. P. C.

**1: 1-11.** We may notice here four things: The state of the Jews that had escaped who were left of the Captivity. The position and character of Nehemiah. The prayer which was mingled with the lamentation. The practical aim and purpose which followed the prayer. All are based upon the one foundation of the special gracious relation of God to His covenant people. P. C.

**1. The words of Nehemiah.** Whether you translate by "words," by "history," or by "acts," in any case this is a title, attributing authorship to Nehemiah; either the authorship of the book or that of the narrative in the first person with which the book begins. Nehemiah was at this time a "cupbearer to the king" (verse 11). From the statements made in chap. 5—for example, verses 16-18—it appears that he had large inherited wealth. We must think of him as a young man, well-bred, a favorite, highly gifted, with a position at court, opportunity to make his way, and such examples of possible success before him as Daniel and Mordecai and Esther. W. J. B.

**3.** They inform him that, the walls being still in many instances broken down and the gates in the same demolished state as when burned by the Chaldeans, those children of the Captivity who dwelt there lay open not only to the incursions and insults of their enemies, but also to the reproach and contempt of their neighbors as a weak and despicable people, and that on both these accounts they were in great affliction and grief of heart. *Prideaux.*

**4.** Nehemiah wept and mourned, and that was well. But between his weeping and mourning and his practical work there had to be still another link of connection. "He wept and mourned," and because he was sad he turned to God, "and I fasted and prayed certain days." There he got at once comfort for his sorrows, his sympathies, and deepening of his sympathies, and thence he drew inspiration that made him a hero and a martyr. So all true service for the world must begin with close communion with God. A. M.—He had no power to aid or help; no resources in his hand, no armies to command, no friends to combine with him. One path was open to him, and that was the path to the throne of grace:

and he availed himself against hope of the last resource of the faithful. He *mourned*, and *wept*, and *fasted*, and *prayed*. This shows the *habitual piety of his disposition*. Though he lived in the corrupt atmosphere of a court, and in a far and foreign land, he had neither forgotten his religion nor sacrificed it at the shrine of worldly ambition. *Anon.*—Note the grand and apparently immediate resolution to throw up brilliant prospects and face a life of danger and suffering and toil. Nehemiah was evidently a favorite with the king, and had the ball at his foot. But the ruins on Zion were more attractive to him than the splendors of Shushan, and he willingly flung away his chances of a great career to take his share of "affliction and reproach." He has never had justice done him in popular estimation. He is not one of the well-known biblical examples of heroic self-abandonment; but he did just what Moses did, and the eulogium of the Epistle to the Hebrews fits him as well as the lawgiver; for he too chose rather to suffer with the people of God than to enjoy pleasures for a season. So must we all, in our several ways, do, if we would have a share in building the walls of the city of God.

**5-11. The prayer.** The course of thought in this prayer is very instructive. It begins with solemnly laying before God His own great name, as the mightiest plea with Him and the strongest encouragement to the suppliant. That commencement is no mere proper invocation, conventionally regarded as the right way of beginning, but it expresses the petitioner's effort to lay hold on God's character as the ground of his hope of answer. The prayer throughout is full of allusions and quotations, and shows how this cupbearer of Artaxerxes had fed his young soul on God's word, and drawn thence the true nourishment of high and holy thoughts and strenuous resolutions and self-sacrificing deeds. Prayers which are cast in the mould of God's own revelation of Himself will not fail of answer. True prayer catches up the promises that flutter down to us, and flings them up again like arrows. The prayer here is all built, then, on that name of Jehovah, and on what the name involves, chiefly on the thought of God as keeping covenant and mercy. He has bound Himself in solemn, irrefragable compact, to a certain line of action. Men "know where to have Him," if we may venture on the familiar expression. He has given us a chart of His course, and He will adhere to it. Therefore we can go to Him with our prayers so long as we keep these within



the ample space of His covenant and ourselves within its terms, by loving obedience. The prayer is "for Thy servants the children of Israel," in which designation, as the next clauses show, the relation established by God, and not the conduct of men, is pleaded as a reason for an answer. The mention of that relation brings at once to Nehemiah's mind the terrible unfaithfulness to it which had marked, and still continued to mark, the whole nation. So lowly confession follows (verses 6, 7). Unprofitable servants they had indeed been. The more loftily we think of our privileges, the more clearly should we discern our sins. Nothing leads a true heart to such self-ashamed penitence as reflection on God's mercy. If a man thinks that God has taken him for a servant, the thought should bow him with conscious unworthiness, not lift him in self-satisfaction. Nehemiah's confession not only sprung from the thought of Israel's vocation so poorly fulfilled, but it also laid the groundwork for his further petitions. The beginning of all true healing of sorrow is confession of sins. Many promising schemes for the alleviation of national and other distresses have come to nothing because their Nehemiahs did not begin with prayer, or prayed for help without acknowledging sin.

The prayer next reminds God of His own words of promise (verses 8, 9), freely quoted and combined from several passages (Lev. 26 : 33-45 ; De. 4 : 25-31, etc.). The reminder of the promise is clinched (verse 10) by the same appeal as formerly to the relation to Himself into which God had been pleased to bring the nation, with an added reference to former deeds, such as the Exodus, in which His strong hand had delivered them. We are always sure of an answer if we ask God not to contradict Himself. Since He has begun He will make an end. It will never be said of Him that He began to build and was not able to finish. The return from Babylon is implied in the Exodus. Nehemiah now binds (verse 11) his single prayer in a bundle with those of the like-minded in Israel. He gathers single ears into a sheaf, which he brings as a "wave offering." And then, in one humble little sentence at the end, he puts his only personal request. The modesty of the man is lovely. His prayer has been all for the people. But now he asks that the capricious and potent will of the king may be inclined to grant his request. If our morning supplication is "Prosper Thy servant this day," and our purposes are for God's glory, we need not fear facing anybody. However

powerful Artaxerxes was, he was but "this man," not God. The phrase does not indicate contempt or undervaluing of the solid reality of his absolute power over Nehemiah, but simply expresses the conviction that the king, too, was a subject of God's, and that his heart was in the hand of Jehovah, to mould as He would. A. M.

The facts as to the scriptural phraseology of this prayer are important, both from the practical religious point of view and from that of criticism. It is as true now as it was in Nehemiah's time, that familiarity with Scripture language is a great help to praying well. And as to critical matters, this is one of many passages which show that the post-exilian Jews recognized as sacred a large proportion of our present Old Testament books without drawing any sharp line of distinction between the five books of the Pentateuch and the others.

11. *The thing he prayed for.* "Grant him compassion in the sight of this man." The meaning of these words may be gathered from the account in chap. 2. His request was perfectly specific. There was nothing vague or uncertain about it. He did not ask that somehow, from some quarter, God would bring help to the Palestine Jews. He proposed himself to make an effort, and he asked God to bless that. The "compassion" he sought from the king was not that the king would interfere in behalf of Jerusalem, or send somebody to interfere ; it was not that the king would permit him to give half his fortune to hire help for his people ; it was, in effect, that he might be permitted to surrender his brilliant position and prospects and sacrifice himself for his people. His prayer is throughout the prayer of one who is consciously unworthy, in behalf of the unworthy, looking to the unmerited grace of God. W. J. B.

*Now I was cupbearer to the king.* The cupbearer's was an office, not only of trust, but also of dignity, in all Eastern courts, as it is to this day with the Shah of Persia. It was an office of trust ; for the king's life might be said to be often in his keeping, poisoning his wine being a common mode of removing an Oriental monarch, and everything which he drank had first to be tasted by the cupbearer. It was an office of dignity. *Tristram.*—Nehemiah was cupbearer to the Persian king, which was a place of great honor and of no less profit. He was highly in the favor of that prince, and as to this world had all that he could hope and wish. It was scarcely to be expected that one in his situation would bestow a thought upon his remote and poor and desolate country ; and not one of ten thousand in his circumstances

would have concerned himself about it. If at that distance he had sent a generous relief to his brethren in Judea, and performed such kind offices toward them as he conveniently could, even this would have been a friendly and liberal behavior; but he proposed to himself to do much more than this. *Jortin.*

**Chap. 2:1-8.** *Prayer answered.* Three or four months had passed since Nehemiah first heard of the distressed condition of his brethren at Jerusalem, and began to pray for them and that he might be permitted to visit and relieve them. So long the answer to his prayer was delayed. But he doubtless continued to pray, and at length the answer came. Meanwhile, he would be able to ripen his plans and prepare himself for his enterprise. P. C.

4. *Then the king said unto me, "For what dost thou make request?"* An opening was thus given him to present his suit. And, agitated as he was, it would have been natural for him to have at once stammered forth his application. But mark his irrepressible spirit of devotion! Though not always in the act, he was always in the attitude of supplication. He was not, therefore, thrown off his guard; he paused; he was silent; and so, says he, "I prayed to the God of heaven." Then, having first made known his request to Him in whose hand are the hearts of kings, he next presented his petition to his earthly sovereign. Is it possible to conceive of a more expressive evidence of the constancy with which this great man waited upon God than the evidence furnished in this simple incident? *H. Stowell.*—Nehemiah dares not open his mouth to the king till his heart hath opened itself by a sudden ejaculation to his God. No business can be so hasty but our prayer may fly up to heaven and solicit God, and bring down an answer before ever our words need to come forth of our lips. In vain shall we hope that any design of ours can prosper if we have not first sent this messenger on our errand. *Bp. H.*

This is one of the most striking instances recorded in the Bible of what is commonly termed ejaculatory prayer—an example of the way in which good men, in the intercourse and business of daily life, especially when brought into circumstances of unexpected difficulty, even when there is no motion of the lips, scarcely more, indeed, than an "upward glancing of the eye," may yet send up such a quick and compacted supplication to God as shall bring down all heaven to their aid. "When we are time-bound," says Thomas Fuller in his "Good Thoughts," "place-bound,

or person-bound, so that we cannot compose ourselves to make a large, solemn prayer, this is the right instant for ejaculations, whether orally uttered or only poured forth inwardly in the heart. Ejaculations take not up any room in the soul. They give liberty of callings, so that, at the same time, one may follow his proper vocation." Oh, what a blessed resource to the Christian merchant amid the fretting annoyances and the thousand perplexities of business! And what a benefit to all thus to fill up the intervals between their more prolonged devotions by brief ejaculatory prayers which go to make the whole life devout! *A. Thompson.*

Sitting down at your desk and taking up your pen, if that be your work, how much better you may do it for just covering your eyes with your hands for a minute and asking God's blessing in prayer. Or, dealing with your fellow-men, some of them impracticable and wrong-headed enough, some of them sharp-set and low-principled enough, some of them provoking and stupid enough—how much better you will keep your temper amid the provocations of business; with how much clearer head and kinder heart you will treat with your fellow-sinners, for a word of silent prayer! If you desire to influence any for good, remember how wisely it has been said that the shortest road to any human heart is found by God; and explain to your Heavenly Father all you wish to do. Every little pain will be better borne and every little joy enhanced by a moment's silent mention of them to God. You can alone with Him speak of a host of little things which really make a great part in your thoughts and in your life, yet which are less suitable for speaking of in united prayer with other people. *Anon.*

8. *Success ascribed to God.* "And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me." Nehemiah, like Ezra before him (Ezra 7:6), ascribes the success of his application to the king to the "good hand of God;" which had, indeed, been conspicuous. The circumstances which had paved the way for the presentation of his petition, the readiness of the king's consent to his requests, the largeness of the facilities granted him—all indicated that his God, whose aid he had sought, had ordered events and influenced the monarch's heart. P. C.—God endorsed the patriotic prayers of Nehemiah, and sent him back with money and much timber to rebuild the city. If we think that all things secular are too common for God's care, we dishonor

both ourselves and Him. God helps nothing wrong, and omits to help nothing right. All right employments are callings into which He puts His servants for their good; and what will He more surely do than help them to find their good? *Bushnell.*

Here is the beginning and end of the whole matter. God has an eye to see us, an ear to hear us, a face to shine on us, and a hand to succor us. The man who can claim God for his own, as Nehemiah could, is sure to prosper. Any one will admit that if the favor of the God of heaven can be secured, there is no doubt about the success; but the "if" seems a great one. How is the favor of the God of heaven to be secured? As Nehemiah secured it. Remember the long prayers of the closet and the short, swift ejaculation in the court. We have God's will to do and a dangerous world to walk through. Praying in our secret places, we may pray also in crowded streets, in the midst of work, on encountering sudden temptation, to our Father who seeth in secret; and He will reward us openly. But Nehemiah had much sore labor before the open reward came; so shall we have if the reward is to be true and lasting. *A. Symington.*

Common history deals mainly with material forces; inspired history lifts the veil, and shows us those more subtle and spiritual forces in operation which do so much to shape the destiny alike of individuals and of communities. As this one Hebrew, for example, retired to some quiet chamber in the palace of Shushan, or to the deep shade of some tree in the gardens around the palace, to "pray his prayer day and night," what an influence was he

thereby putting forth upon the counsels of Artaxerxes, upon the distant Jerusalem, and upon the future history of the kingdom of God—touching the first link in the chain on which all others depended, moving the hand that was moving the universe! *A. Thompson.*

**9-11.** *Nehemiah's journey to Jerusalem.* On his way to Jerusalem, Nehemiah would pass through the provinces of various Persian satraps and governors. To those beyond the Euphrates he carried letters, which he took care to deliver, though by doing so he aroused the hostility of Sanballat. Being accompanied by an escort of Persian soldiers, he experienced neither difficulty nor danger by the way, but effected his journey in about three months. The Samaritans seemingly heard of his advance, and were "grieved exceedingly;" but no attempt was made to obstruct his journey or even to delay his arrival at his destination. The knot of desperate men collected in the old Israelite capital, and animated with a bitter hatred of the neighboring Jewish community, which had rejected their offers of friendship (Ezra 4:3) and declined to allow them to help in the rebuilding of the Temple, saw with sullen disappointment the coming of a man who was likely to advance the welfare of their detested neighbors, but did not venture on making any open display of hostility. Probably they feared to come into collision with the Persian escort, an attack on which would have been a flagrant act of rebellion, and have drawn down upon them the vengeance of the great king. Nehemiah therefore entered Jerusalem without encountering any opposition. *G. R.*

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## Section 60.

NIGHT EXAMINATION. CONFERENCE. DETERMINATION TO BUILD. NAMES OF BUILDERS AND DETAIL OF POINTS. CONFRONTING ADVERSARIES.

NEHEMIAH 2:12-20; 3:1-32; 4:1-23.

**2:12** AND I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, 13 save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the dragon's well, and to the dung gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were 14 broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to 15 pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall; and I turned back,

16 and entered by the valley gate, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did ; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the 17 nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. Then said I unto them, Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire : come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. 18 And I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me ; as also of the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they 19 strengthened their hands for the good *work*. But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do ? will ye rebel against the king ? 20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us ; therefore we his servants will arise and build : but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

3 : 1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate ; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it ; even unto the tower of Ham- 2 meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananel. And next unto him builded the men 3 of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri. And the fish gate did the sons of Hassenah build ; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the 4 bolts thereof, and the bars thereof. And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, 5 the son of Meshezabel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana. And next unto them the Tekoites repaired ; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their 6 lord. And the old gate repaired Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah ; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the bolts thereof, and the 7 bars thereof. And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, *which appertained to the throne of the governor* 8 beyond the river. Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths. And next unto him repaired Hananiah one of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem even 9 unto the broad wall. And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of 10 half the district of Jerusalem. And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabneiah. 11 Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab, repaired another portion, 12 and the tower of the furnaces. And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Hallohesh, 13 the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, he and his daughters. The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah ; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the bolts 14 thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits of the wall unto the dung gate. And the dung gate repaired Malchijah the son of Rechab, the ruler of the district of Beth- 15 haccherem ; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the bolts thereof, and the bars thereof. 16 And the fountain gate repaired Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of the district of Mizpah ; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the bolts thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Shelah by the king's garden, even unto the stairs 17 that go down from the city of David. After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of half the district of Bethzur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, 18 and unto the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty men. After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler 19 of half the district of Keilah, for his district. After him repaired their brethren, Bavvai the son of Henadad, the ruler of half the district of Keilah. And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another portion, over against the going up to the 20 armoury at the turning *of the wall*. After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired another portion, from the turning *of the wall* unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high 21 priest. After him repaired Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz another portion, 22 from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib. And after 23 him repaired the priests, the men of the Plain. After them repaired Benjamin and Hasshub over against their house. After them repaired Azariah the son of Maasciah the son of 24 Ananiah beside his own house. After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another portion, from the house of Azariah unto the turning *of the wall*, and unto the corner. Palal the son of Uzai repaired over against the turning *of the wall*, and the tower that standeth out from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah 26 the son of Parosh repaired. (Now the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that standeth out.) After him the Tekoites repaired another portion, over against the great tower that standeth out, and unto the wall 28 of Ophel. Above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his own house. 29 After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his own house. And after him 30 repaired Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the east gate. After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another portion. After 31 him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber. After him repaired Malchijah one of the goldsmiths unto the house of the Nethinim, and of the merchants, over 32 against the gate of Hammiphkad, and to the ascent of the corner. And between the ascent of the corner and the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

4:1 But it came to pass that, when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was  
 2 wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren  
 and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify them-  
 selves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out  
 3 of the heaps of rubbish, seeing they are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him,  
 and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall.  
 4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn back their reproach upon their own head,  
 5 and give them up to spoiling in a land of captivity: and cover not their iniquity, and let  
 not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the  
 6 builders. So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half *the height*  
 thereof: for the people had a mind to work.  
 7 But it came to pass that, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Am-  
 monites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went  
 8 forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; and  
 they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause  
 9 confusion therein. But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against  
 10 them day and night, because of them. And Judah said, The strength of the bearers  
 of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the  
 11 wall. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the  
 12 midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. And it came to pass that, when  
 the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye must  
 13 return unto us. Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open  
 places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their  
 14 bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the  
 rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, which is great and terrible,  
 and fight for your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses.  
 15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had  
 brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his  
 16 work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the  
 work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and  
 17 the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They that builded the wall and they that  
 bare burdens laded themselves, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and  
 18 with the other held his weapon; and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side,  
 19 and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. And I said unto the nobles,  
 and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are sep-  
 20 arated upon the wall, one far from another: in what place soever ye hear the sound of the  
 21 trumpet, resort ye thither unto us; our God shall fight for us. So we wrought in the work:  
 and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.  
 22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within  
 23 Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and may labour in the day. So  
 neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me,  
 none of us put off our clothes, every one *went with his weapon to the water.*

**2: 12-20.** *Steps taken by Nehemiah preliminary to his building of the wall, and first appearance of opposition.* Nehemiah expected opposition, and as long as possible concealed his designs. He made his survey of the wall by night, that it might escape observation. The time for action being come, he laid the matter before the head men of the city (verse 17), whom he easily persuaded when he assured them of Artaxerxes' consent and goodwill. Preparations then began to be made; and immediately murmurs of opposition arose. Three opponents are now spoken of—Sanballat, Tobiah and an Arabian, Geshem or Gashmu,

not previously mentioned. These persons appear to have sent a formal message to the authorities of Jerusalem (verse 19), taxing them with an intention to rebel. Nehemiah made no direct reply to this charge, but boldly stated his resolve to "arise and build," and denied Sanballat's right to interfere with him. P. C.

**12-16.** Having rested after his long journey three days, he "arose in the night, he, and some few men with him." To none, even of these few, had he "told what God had put in his heart to do at Jerusalem." For resolutions which affect the Church's life are formed by men whom the Spirit teaches to be silent until

the time has come for action. So Nehemiah rode out by night, while the stars were shining into the well of Gihon and Solomon's Pool. Then, after ascending the Valley of Kedron, he re-entered by the valley gate and returned home. During his ride he had seen by fitful gleams the tumbled masses of masonry close beside the course carefully trodden by his horse—for the rubbish choked the path, "so that there was no place for the beast under him to pass." Again and again he came to gates consumed with fire, which, as the Assyrian sculptures show us, was invariably done with captured cities. What his thoughts were we are not fully told. But of one thing we may be sure. It was not only as a patriot that he felt bitter sorrow. As long as those walls were broken down the purposes of God must be unfulfilled and the footsteps of His Anointed must linger. For the mysterious weeks were to be counted from "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah, the Prince." Haunted by this voice of prophecy—by that other oracle of the Book of Jeremiah, which was so evidently familiar to him, "The city shall be built from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner"—he announces his purpose: "Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem." *Bp. W. Alexander.*

**17, 18.** It was necessary, first of all, to take the other authorities of the place into council. So—on the next day probably—Nehemiah summoned to his presence "the priests, the nobles, and the rulers"—Eliashib doubtless, the head of the priestly order, the elders of Jerusalem, and the head men of such villages as lay near at hand—and opened to them the extent of his powers and the nature of his designs. Artaxerxes, he said, had empowered him to rebuild the entire circuit of the walls, and to place the city in a state of complete defence. The thing must be done as quickly as possible. Preparations must be quietly made, and on a given day workmen must present themselves along the whole line of the defences, ready all of them to set to the work simultaneously, and build the portion allotted to them. New materials would not be needed, unless it were for the gates and the gate towers; the walls might be rebuilt out of the ruins and rubbish which marked their former site. The inhabitants of each quarter should repair the part of the wall nearest to where they dwelt. All classes should take part in the work—priests, nobles, tradesmen, merchants, and artisans. As the inhabitants of Jerusalem were not sufficiently numerous to ac-

complish the entire task in the short time that was needful, other workers must be called in from the country towns and villages, who might gather themselves together at the part of the wall which was nearest to them. Jericho, Tekoah, Gibeon, Mizpeh, Zanoah, Beth-hacarem, Beth-zur, Keilah, could easily send a portion of their population to share the labors of those who dwelt in Jerusalem, since none of these places lay at any great distance from the capital. A general willingness to give their services seems to have been displayed alike by the men of Jerusalem and the dwellers in the country districts, since only one abstention is noticed—that of the "nobles of Tekoah." G. R.

**20.** "Then answered I them," says Nehemiah, with noble reliance upon God—"Then answered I them"—not that the king had given me a decree to undertake the work; not that I was in reality obeying, instead of resisting him; but this heavenly hero's sublime and magnanimous answer was, "The God of heaven, He will prosper us; therefore we, His servants, will arise and build." And in the might of that confidence they prosecuted their task, spite of every discouragement; spite of contempt and fraud and treachery; spite of false friends and open enemies, till, in fifty-two days, this handful of feeble men brought the mighty work to a happy issue; the walls of the city were finished, and the gates were again set up, because the good hand of their God was upon them. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" *Stowell.*

**Chap. 3.** The third chapter contains an honorable register of those who despaired of their country, but arose, in a time of feebleness and depression, to rebuild their capital. They were of all ranks and classes. First rose up, as became him, the high priest, with his brethren the priests. The Levites, too, put their hands to the work. Then came the rulers, merchants, "goldsmiths and apothecaries"—indeed, all the well-doing population of the city. Some of the ladies of high rank showed a fine example at this emergency. The daughters of Shallum, who was "ruler of the half part of Jerusalem," helped their father in the work. Helpers also came in from the small towns of Judea, rising superior to all petty jealousies, and preferring Jerusalem above their chief joy. There were a few half-hearted in the enterprise, such as the nobles of Tekoa, who "put not their necks to the work of their Lord." They seem to have been the magnates of a little town; and, like petty great people in all times, thought it enough to give their patronage. They were exceptions, however, to

the general rule. The builders worked with a will and on a plan which gave exercise to both public zeal and private interest. Every man built over against his own house or his own chamber if he were not a separate householder. At the same time, every one was inspirited by the thought that he was filling up his part of a great design for the common good, and for the welfare, not of a gate, or street, or quarter of the city, but of all Jerusalem. D. F.

With the general purpose of doing honor to the deserving is combined the wish graphically to place the whole scene before the reader. This is done by means of a profusion of topographical details. Nehemiah takes us along the entire circuit of the wall—shows us “the tower of Meah,” “the tower of Hananeel,” “the fish gate,” “the old gate,” “the throne of the governor,” “the broad wall,” “the tower of the furnaces,” “the valley gate,” “the dung gate,” “the gate of the fountain,” “the pool of Siloam,” “the king’s garden,” “the stairs,” “the sepulchres of David,” “the pool that was made,” “the armory,” “the tower that lay out,” “Ophel,” “the horse gate,” “the gate Miphkad,” “the sheep gate,” and “the ascent of the corner”—exhibits to us the party at work in each place, repairing a portion of the wall, or rebuilding a gateway—notes the zeal of those who, completing the piece first assigned to them rapidly, then undertook a second piece (verses 11, 19, 21, 24, etc.), and altogether gives us a description which is full of life and activity. The passage is invaluable to the topographer, and though not resolving all the difficulties with which he meets in his attempts to reproduce the plan of the ancient city, furnishes more effectual help than all other existing notices on the subject put together. P. C.

The wall was parcelled out among forty-four working parties, who, on a given day, all mustered in their several places, and began the tasks allotted to them. On the eastern side of the city, in the neighborhood of the Temple, labored the priests, the Nethinim, the goldsmiths and the merchants; about the northeast corner the work was done by the men of Jericho; along the north wall were employed the Tekoites, the men of Gibeon, and the men of Mizpeh; toward the west, the inhabitants of Zanoah; toward the south, a portion of the men of Mizpeh, together with the inhabitants of Beth-haccarem, Bethzur, and Keilah. The Levites worked at portions of the wall of Ophel. Small parcels of the wall seem to have been assigned to individuals, either singly or in pairs, who exercised a super-

intendence over the men of their trade or of their neighborhood. Particular attention appears to have been paid to the gate towers—eleven in number—which broke the line of the walls at irregular intervals. These had to be provided with guard-rooms, heavy wooden doors, solid bars, and other fastenings, as the security of the town would greatly depend upon them. So far as can be gathered from Nehemiah’s account, there were at this time five gates in the eastern wall, three in the northern wall, two in the southern wall, and one in the western wall—the “valley gate.” There were also, in the spaces between the gates, and especially at any angle formed by the walls, or at any weak point, protecting towers or bastions, which projected beyond the general line of the walls. G. R.

**10, 23, 28. Every one over against his house.** The priests and others, whose houses were near the wall, repaired that part of the wall which was opposite each of their dwellings. This suggests *the order to be observed in seeking the good of others*. Let every one do the work which lies nearest to him. Let him begin with his own family. No amount of good work elsewhere will compensate for neglect there. Christian parents can do most good to the community by training well their children. Then, as ability and opportunity permit, let each seek the good of his dependents, friends, neighbors, the congregation with which he worships, the city or town, the country, the Church at large, the world. P. C.

When the Hebrews set about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, each man was instructed to build over against his own house. That was better economy than for each man to do a little everywhere, and by that means not do much of anything anywhere. The results are a good deal of the latter sort when a man stops with being simply a member of the Church universal; he neither denotes much to the Church nor the Church much to him. We get affected by close contacts with live things at specific points. It is a great thing to love all mankind. But it is better to say a single word of cheer and comfort to the man who stands next you than merely to love the whole race with a thin dilute of affection that never reaches the point of doing anything for anybody. The best way really to know how to love the man that is farthest from you is to begin by loving and blessing the man that is next you. It is a small matter, I confess, to love your neighbor, but the slumbering potencies of universal love are all in it. C. H. P.

Consider how the greatest things ever done on earth have been done by little and little—little agents, little persons, and little things. How was the wall restored around Jerusalem? By each man building the breach before his own door. How was the soil of the New World redeemed from gloomy forests? By each sturdy emigrant cultivating the patch round his own log hut. How have the greatest battles been won? Not by the generals, but by the rank and file—every man holding his own post, and ready to die on the battlefield. The victory was achieved by the blood and courage of the many. So, if the world is ever to be conquered for our Lord, it is not by ministers, nor by office-bearers, but by every member of Christ's body being a working member; doing his own work; filling his own sphere; holding his own post; and saying to Jesus, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" *Guthrie.*

So it is by every one building the part of the wall which lies opposite to himself; by each one, like the Baptist of old, fulfilling his course; by each one doing the duty which devolves on him as a soldier fighting under Christ in the great army of the faithful, that the whole work is to be carried on and completed; this one taking up this field, and another that field, at home or abroad—going himself, or contributing to make others go. *McCash.*

At whatever point we touch the moral desolation of society, there is our place of building. At whatever spot we touch sin, there is our place of fighting. The place where our vocation plants us, and our usual duties and relations engage us, is the one where we shall wear and use God's armor to best effect. It probably seemed to each builder on the wall a very arduous undertaking to rebuild the whole city wall; and so it might have done if he had had it all to do. But each one did his little, and worked over against his own door, and the work was completed in two months. C. H. P.

**Chap. 4.** *Open opposition offered to the work by Sanballat and Tobiah, and arrangements made by Nehemiah to meet it.* Sanballat and his friends, when they first heard that the wall was actually being restored, the working parties formed, and the work taken in hand, could scarcely believe it. What? These feeble Jews undertake so heavy a task, attempt a work that must occupy so long a time, and for which they had not even the necessary materials? (verse 2). Impossible! Such a wall as they could build would be so weak that if a fox tried to get over it he would break it down (verse 3). But when, despite their scoffs, the working

parties labored steadily, and the whole wall was brought to half the intended height (verse 6), and the gaps made in it by the Babylonians were filled up (verse 7), they changed their tone, admitted the seriousness of the undertaking, and the probability that it would succeed unless steps were taken to prevent it. Nehemiah's work would be accomplished before the court could be communicated with. Accordingly, it was resolved to stop the building by main force. Sanballat and Tobiah, his Ammonite hanger-on, entered into a league with the neighboring peoples—the Philistines of Ashdod, the Ammonites, and some Arab tribe or tribes—and agreed with them that a conjoint attack should be made upon Jerusalem by a confederate army (chap. 3:7, 8). But Nehemiah, having learned what was intended, made preparations to meet and repulse the assailants. He began by setting a watch day and night (verse 9) on the side on which the attack was expected. When an assault seemed imminent, he stopped the work and drew up the whole people in battle array, with swords, spears, and bows, behind the wall, but in conspicuous places, so that they could be seen from a distance, and in this attitude awaited the enemy (verse 13). The result was that no actual assault was delivered. The work was then resumed, but under additional precautions. The laborers were compelled to work either with a weapon in one hand, or at the least with a sword at their side (verses 17, 18). Nehemiah's private attendants were armed and formed into two bands, one of which worked on the wall, while the other kept guard, and held the arms, offensive and defensive, of their fellow-servants (verse 16). At night the working parties retired to rest within the city, but Nehemiah himself, his brothers, his servants, and his bodyguard, remained outside, keeping watch by turns, and sleeping in their clothes, until the wall was finished (verses 22, 23). P. C.

**9. We made our prayer and set a watch.** There are times when we must pray with our eyes open; when it is hardly safe to wink lest we lose sight of our danger. Praying against danger is but a sham when it takes the place of watching against danger. If we pray that we may not be surprised by the enemy, we must watch lest the enemy surprise us. If we pray for strength to resist the enemy, we must watch for the enemy's coming, that we may use our God-given strength effectively. If we pray that the enemy may not approach us, we ought to watch for an answer to our prayers, that we may be sure that the coast is



clear on every side. There is no duty of calling on God for help that doesn't include the idea of doing something ourselves. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "Stand, therefore; praying at all seasons in the spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance." H. C. T.—The true way to meet opposition is twofold—prayer and prudent watchfulness. "Pray to God, and keep your powder dry" is not a bad compendium of the duty of a Christian soldier. The union of appeal to God with the full use of common sense, watchfulness, and prudence would dissipate many hindrances to successful service. A. M.

What doth Nehemiah, with his Jews, for their common safety? They pray and watch; they pray unto God; they watch against the enemy. And thus shall we happily prevail against those spiritual wickednesses which war against our souls. No evil can surprise us if we watch; no evil can hurt us if we pray. *Bp. H.*—That was the way of this good man, and should be our way; all his cares, all his griefs, all his fears he spread before God, and thereby made himself easy. This was the first thing he did: before he used any means he made his prayer to God, for with Him we must always begin. Having prayed, he set a watch against them. The instructions Christ has given us in our spiritual warfare agree with this example (Matt. 26:41), "Watch and pray." If we think to secure ourselves by prayer only without watchfulness, we are slothful and tempt God. If by watchfulness without prayer, we are proud and slight God; and either way we forfeit His protection. *H.*—We are to watch and keep our garments. We are to act faith upon the victory of Christ, by which He has overcome the world. We are to commend ourselves to God in prayer that He may "keep and present us before the presence of His glory." We are to think upon the promises, and to work them into our hearts by spiritual reasoning, and so "escape the corruption that is in the world through lust." All these things *are to be done*. It is folly and presumption to think that because *power* is with God and from God, *effort* should not be in *ourselves*! *T. Manton.*

**10. The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed.** The complaint seems to be that by the drawing off of men from the working parties to act as guards, those parties were so weakened that they could not continue the work, the quantity of rubbish being so great. P. C.—The state of Jerusalem today illustrates his difficulties from the "much rubbish." Except on the area of the Mosque

of Omar, ancient Jerusalem lies many feet below the present surface. Eleven times has the city been captured and dismantled, and after each siege the materials have been thrown down till we may sink a shaft from twenty to even a hundred feet before we reach the natural surface. *Tristram.*

**10-13.** Nehemiah enumerates his discouragements: 1. The Jews engaged in the work grew weary of it, and despaired of its completion. 2. The adversaries boasted and threatened. 3. The provincial Jews declared the danger of continuing the work to be great. B. C.—In these verses Nehemiah tells, in his simple way, of the difficulties from three several quarters which threatened to stop his work. He had trouble from the workmen, from the enemies, and from the mass of Jews not resident in Jerusalem. The enthusiasm of the builders had cooled, and the magnitude of their task began to frighten them. It is a great piece of Christian duty to recognize difficulties, and not be cowed by them. The true inference from the facts would have been, "so that we must put all our strength into the work, and trust in our God to help us." We may not be responsible for discouragements suggesting themselves, but we are responsible for letting them become dissuasive. Our one question should be, Has God appointed the work? If so, it has to be done, however little our strength and however mountainous the accumulations of rubbish. The second part in the trio was taken by the enemies—Sanballat and Tobiah and the rest. They laid their plans for a sudden swoop down on Jerusalem, and calculated that if they could surprise the builders at their work they would have no weapons to show fight with, and so would be easily dispatched. Killing the builders was but a means; the desired end is significantly put last (verse 11), as being the stopping of the abhorred work. But killing the workmen does not cause the work to cease when it is God's work, as the history of the Church in all ages shows. Conspirators should hold their tongues. It was not a hopeful way of beginning an attack, of which the essence was secrecy and suddenness, to talk about it. A bird of the air carries the matter. The third voice is that of the Jews in other parts of the land, and especially those living on the borders of Samaria, next door to Sanballat. Verse 12 is probably best taken as in the Revised Version, which makes "Ye must return to us" the imperative and often-repeated summons from these to the contingents from their respective places of abode, who had gone

up to Jerusalem to help in building. Alarms of invasion made the scattered villagers wish to have all their men capable of bearing arms back again to defend their own homes. It was a most natural demand; but in this case, as so often, audacity is truest prudence; and in all high causes there come times when men have to trust their homes and dear ones to God's protection. The necessity is heart-rending, and we may well pray that we may not be exposed to it; but if it clearly arises, a devout man can have no doubt of his duty. And how character is ennobled by so severe a sacrifice! A. M.

**14. And I looked.** He saw the enemy coming. **Rose up.** To take command and give orders. **And said.** He spoke a few words to encourage his men, telling them to remember whom they fought under—viz., the Lord; and what they had to fight for—viz., their homes and all they held dear. The attack was not made, however. Perhaps the attacking party received word from their allies within the walls; perhaps they saw for themselves that the surprise had failed and the Jews were prepared. This was not the first nor the last time when thorough preparation for fighting removed the necessity of fighting. W. J. B.

Now doth Nehemiah arm his people; and for the time changes their trowels into swords and spears and bows; raising up their courage with a vehement exhortation "to remember the Lord, which is great and terrible; and to fight for their brethren, their sons, their daughters, their wives, and their houses." Nothing can so hearten us to the encountering of any evil as the remembrance of that infinite power and wisdom, which can either avert, or mitigate, or sanctify it. We could not faint if we did not forget God. *Bp. H.*

**Remember the Lord, and fight.** Trust in God quickens activity, not slackens it. It nerves the strong arm, not paralyzes it. It is while we remember God's readiness to make our honest labor effective that we work with a will for our daily bread, that we push forward in business, that we study and write and preach in the conviction that our toil will tell on ages, tell for God. The men who remember the Lord in His power and goodness are the men who rise up against all odds, and battle evil in high places and low, with never a thought of being overborne and defeated. It is those who back up against the Rock of Ages and defy the universe who have true faith in God and prove it as courageous soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ. A readiness to fight for God's cause is

a test of loving, faith-filled remembrance of God. H. C. T.

"Remember the Lord," said Nehemiah, when he wanted to arouse the courage of the languid people. To a man in discouragement the very thought of God is like a cool wind after a day of oppressive heat. It refreshes him, and gives him renewed courage to bear and to do. It adds somehow to the totality of his being something that gives to all the rest an invincible pluck, and so doubles his force. A man who knows that God is on his side will watch and fight and work all the better for keeping this truth uppermost. It takes away from him the fear of man "that bringeth a snare," and puts the fear of God so high that all other fear disappears. Such a man is hard to beat, for he never knows when he is beaten. He always picks up his weapons again and renews the fight. *Schauffler.*

The calm heroism of Nehemiah and his wise action in the emergency are told in verses 13-15. He made a demonstration in force, which at once showed that the scheme of a surprise was blown to pieces. The walls were manned, and the enemy would have to deal not with unarmed laborers, but with prepared soldiers. The work was stopped, and trowel and spade exchanged for sword and spear. "And I looked," says Nehemiah. His careful eye travelled over the lines, and, seeing all in order, he cheered the little army with ringing words. He had prayed (Neh. 1:5) to "the great and terrible God," and now he bids his men remember Him, and thence draw strength and courage. The only real antagonist of fear is faith. If we can grasp God we shall not dread Sanballat and his crew. Unless we do, the world is full of dangers which it is not folly to fear. Note, too, that the people are animated for the fight by reminding them of the dear ones whose lives and honor hung on the issue. Nothing is said about fighting for God and His temple and city; but the motives adduced are not less sacred. Family love is God's best of earthly gifts; and though it is sometimes duty to "forget thine own people and thy father's house," as we have just seen, nothing short of these highest obligations can supersede the sweet one of straining every nerve for the well-being of dear ones in the hallowed circle of home. So the plan of a sudden rush came to nothing. It does not appear that the enemy was in sight; but the news of the demonstration soon reached them, and was effectual. Prompt preparation against possible dangers is often the means of turning them

aside. Watchfulness is indispensable to vigor of Christian character and efficiency of work. Suspicion is hateful and weakening; but a man who tries to serve God in such a world as this had need to be like the living creatures in the Revelation, having "eyes all over." "Blessed is the man that (in that sense) feareth always." The upshot of the alarm is very beautifully told: "We returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work." No time was wasted in jubilation. The work was the main thing, and the moment the interruption was ended, back to it they all went. It is a fine illustration of persistent discharge of duty, and of that most valuable quality, the ability and inclination to keep up the main purpose of a life continuous through interruptions, like a stream of sweet water running through a bog. A. M.

**15.** Three things go well together in work for God—prayer, promptitude and perseverance. Had the builders ceased until they should go out and attack Sanballat or Geshem, it would have been long ere their task was finished. But no, attack was not for them, only defence; and the moment that the display of readiness to defend themselves has caused the enemy to retire, they turn eagerly to finish the wall. Every course of masonry laid was better than a hundred victories. Having arms in their hands did not tempt them to fight; success did not uplift them; they knew that it was God who had brought to naught the counsel of Sanballat, and they went on doing His work with all their might. *A. Symington.*

**16-20.** Nehemiah's precautions concerned six classes of men—viz., his personal retainers, two classes of workmen, the officers, the trumpeter, and the general. *My servants* (cf. verse 23 and chaps. 5:10, 16; 13:19). These were trained men, who could be depended upon. Half of them wrought in the work, while the other half, themselves armed doubtless, had armor in readiness for the working half. It was impossible for a man to wear armor while working on the wall; but by this arrangement there was always a little effective band of armed men ready to take the initiative in resisting an attack from foes without or traitors within; and their number would be doubled with no delay except while their comrades were putting on their armor. *W. J. B.*

God's workers must be prepared for warfare as well as building. There have been epochs in which that necessity was realized in a very sad manner; and the Church on earth will always have to be the Church militant. But it is well to remember that building is the end, and

fighting is but the means. The trowel, not the sword, is the natural instrument. Controversy is second best—a necessity, no doubt, but an unwelcome one, and only permissible as a subsidiary help to doing the true work, rearing the walls of the city of God.

"He that sounded the trumpet was by me." The gallant leader was everywhere, animating by his presence. He meant to be in the thick of the fight if it should come. And so he kept the trumpeter by his side, and gave orders that when he sounded all should hurry to the place; for there the enemy would be, and Nehemiah would be where they were. "The work is great and large, and we are separated . . . one far from another." How naturally the words lend themselves to the old lesson so often drawn from them! God's servants are widely parted, by distance, by time, and, alas! by less justifiable causes. Unless they draw together they will be overwhelmed, taken in detail and crushed. They must rally to help each other against the common foe. Thank God, the longing for manifest Christian unity is deeper today than ever it was. But much remains to be done before it is adequately fulfilled in the recognition of the common bond of brotherhood, which binds us all in one family if we have one Father. American and English Christians are bound to seek the tightening of the bonds between them and to set themselves against politicians who may seek to keep apart those who both in the flesh and in the spirit are brothers. All Christians have one great Captain; and He will be in the forefront of every battle. His clear trumpet call should gather all His servants to His side. A. M.

There are pressing difficulties in the believer's way while he is engaged in the prosecution of his work. The Christian life is a scene of perpetual conflict. Heart corruption is the greatest foe of the Christian. From that he cannot flee. And had he nothing else than this corruption to fear while he strives to rear up the spiritual edifice—*i.e.*, to advance in grace and in godliness—he would yet require to be furnished, as the people were under Nehemiah, with the weapon to defend as well as with the implement to build. When we consider the very dangerous position which the Christian occupies, with a crafty adversary on the one side—viz., Satan—an alluring and sometimes a threatening foe on the other side—viz., the world—and a treacherous heart within, his proper attitude is that which was assumed by the people spoken of in the text, every one of whom, while with one of his hands he wrought

in the work, with the other hand held a weapon. These Jews were in the exercise of constant watchfulness. They knew that there was evil meditated against them; but they knew not the moment when the onset might be, and therefore, like wise men, they stood prepared for it. Christian watchfulness is one of the most indispensable, and, at the same time, one of the most comprehensive duties to which the disciples of Jesus are called. The Jews were careful to furnish themselves with the means of defence. The Christian has the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The attitude of the Jews indicates the firmest determination to make progress in their work. Advancement is the watchword of the Christian. *A. D. Davidson.*

**21. So we labored; and half of them held the spears.** This is a summary of the main points previously related: "So we continued to work; and one half of my personal followers continued to keep watch and to hold the spears" (verse 16). **From the rising of the morning, etc.** This is additional, and shows how early the work commenced each morning, and how late it continued. P. C.

The closing verse tells again how Nehemiah's immediate dependents divided work and watching, and adds to the picture the continuousness of their toil from the first gray of morning till darkness showed the stars and ended another day of toil. Happy they who thus "from morn till noon, from noon till dewy eve," labor in the work of the Lord! For them, every new morning will dawn with new strength, and every evening be calm with the consciousness of "something attempted, something done." A. M.

The section is rich in analogies for spiritual things. As believers, we have an important building work to do, and we have to do it in the presence of spiritual enemies without and within. There are few Bible characters from whom the practical worker can get so many points as from Nehemiah. And, among other things, he is especially characterized by this: the more utterly he feels his dependence upon God ("our God shall fight for us," verse 20), the more carefully does he attend to every minute detail which may insure success. W. J. B.

Cultivated, scientific man is fast becoming passionless intellect. Religion resides in the affections, imagination, emotions, conscience. These are to be utterly extirpated; and religion

must wither away in its very roots before the positive philosophy. Yes; in many a tone the epigram is uttered that burns and stings. "What of these feeble Jews, these clerics and clerically minded laymen? Will they revive the stones which modern thought has overthrown or pulverized? Not to speak of the colossal strength of organized German science, the light brush of the fox of French criticism shall even break down their miserable walls of dogma!" Yet, for all that, God's people "have a mind to work." The Church will be repaired. One day God's summer light shall strike upon the topmost row. Christ, the Divine Healer, will own the work of restoration by miracles of love at the "sheep gate" and the "pool of Siloam." The wall shall stand, uncrumbled by the assaults of unbelief, unscathed by the fires of criticism, untouched by the tooth of time. The songs that were murmured in the night among the ruins by voices half choked with sobs shall be exchanged for hymns, wafted upward by the music of silver trumpets, and chanted by the long processions circling round the walls.

No miracle is recorded of Nehemiah's restoration; and it is all the more precious for us. Yet how marvellous was the rapidity with which the renewal was accomplished. So with that other and greater work of building up God's temple of restored humanity from the ruins of the fall, wrought out between Good Friday and Whitsuntide. "The work was finished in fifty and two days." Give us a year for a day, and who shall say what God may have wrought?

Yes; Nehemiah's journey in darkness and sorrow was not more different from the festal processions, sweeping on with light and song, when the visionary's dream among the moonlit ruins stood palpably in majestic stone, than the beginnings of our work here and now from the joy that waits us—perhaps even here—certainly in the city that is above. 'Tis a book where all spiritual restorers may have their names written. There is a work that does not end when the worker's weary hands are folded and the thinker's busy brain is still. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to each to profit others.

Woman has her honored place in our restoration. Is it not written, "Shallum repaired, he and his daughters?" Sister, deaconess, district visitor, parish helper—all are wanted. Let it not be said of our men of intellectual culture, "Their nobles put not their neck to the work of the Lord." Thoughtful Christians, laymen

especially, are called upon to grapple with social and economical questions, which are as urgent for us as the question of "the hundredth part" (or twelve per cent interest) was for Nehemiah's contemporaries—such as the Church's duty in relation to strikes and labor, to the organization of charity, to the temperance movement. Educated Christian men are specially needed to repair the part of the wall "over against their house." Some of them are required to adjust the boundary lines between science and faith; to show us that law is not a chain coiled round the living God, but rather a thread which He holds. Others are needed to quicken interest in theological thought by helping men to a more living knowledge of the Bible. Others should devote themselves to the centre of all Christian thought—the theology of the incarnation—the dogma enshrined in the transparent depths of the angel's word, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

The age is impatient of miracle; it is patient of fact. To minds impatient of isolated miracles such a theology will show the central, unquestionable miracle, Jesus Himself—that is, one from the cradle to the grave, walking in a spotless purity, through all temptation wearing a conscience without a scar; treading the great deep of human life, and never wetting His feet with the spray; equally at home with saints in the glory of the Mount, and with men writhing in misery at its base; elect to wipe away the tears of humanity, to bear it undwarfed and undimmed to the heavenly places—yet to whom we can go when the shame burns in the cheek and the sweat stands upon the brow. Men will recognize in this a new humanity formed by a new contact with the creative power. The theology of the incarnation will prove itself by enabling men to understand what is otherwise a tangled mass of contradictions—the life and character of Jesus. To our age, which appeals to fact, such a theology will go on to unfold the fact of the spiritual life, of which faith tells us that its light is the written Word, its breath prayer, its food the [ineffably precious promises]. Away with the cant which would make theology destructive of the beauty of religion. As well assert that a knowledge of botany destroys the beauty of a flower. Listen not to those who speak of it as if it were like the bent grass fastened to its place, describing forever the same monotonous

segments of circles, according to the wind. The words of the God Man have illimitable applications. Talk not of the obscurity of Christian dogma. If such there be, it is not the vulgar and deceitful obscurity of the fog; it is the glorious obscurity of the long, deep distances of the lustrous sky.

Others, again, are wanted to teach the ignorant; to waft some notes of Gospel pardon and peace beyond their present limits; to tell metallic natures, as hard as the gold which their fingers clutch, that "it shall not profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul." All the children of the Church are bound to show something in word or work of the beauty of Christ; to develop in themselves and others "the life of godliness, intellectual, devotional, practical," and so to "build up the wall of Jerusalem."

One part of Jeremiah's prophecy has been fulfilled in Nehemiah's restoration. "Behold the days come that the city shall be built from the tower of Hananeel to the gate of the corner." The other sweeter and higher music shall not be lost forever. Not only shall the desolation and stagnation of some neglected parish; the sin and misery of some squalid alley, where men do the works of Satan, with a beast's heart or a devil's, pass away. The very type of leprosy; the very image of death and hell; the very spot where the carcasses rot, defiling God's earth; the very emblem of the obstinate clinging sin, that even the altar fires cannot purge away; the very fields whose name teaches that they are outside, Gareb and Goath and the rest shall be taken into the broadening circuit of the holy city. The joy that quivers faintly in the pages of Nehemiah throbs to the music of the Gospel. Faint chimes, struck before the time, and dying away upon the breeze, waken again and clash out upon the bells of the Apocalypse. The sealing of the covenant passes into the sealing of God's servants upon the forehead. The joy of which Nehemiah speaks is transformed into the higher joy, when all those who have worked for "the Jerusalem which now is" shall be gathered into "the Jerusalem which is above;" when after the decays of time all builders and restorers—from apostles on—having cried on earth, "Remember me, O God, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy," shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and keep the Eternal Feast of Tabernacles in "Jerusalem the Golden." *Bp. W. Alexander.*

## Section 61.

## REFORM OF USURY. NEHEMIAH'S GENEROSITY

NEHEMIAH 5 : 1-19.

5 : 1 THEN there arose a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren  
 2 the Jews. For there were that said, We, our sons and our daughters, are many : let us get  
 3 corn, that we may eat and live. Some also there were that said, We are mortgaging our  
 4 fields, and our vineyards, and our houses : let us get corn, because of the dearth. There  
 were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute upon our fields and our  
 5 vineyards. Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children :  
 and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our  
 daughters are brought into bondage *already* : neither is it in our power to help it ; for other  
 6 men have our fields and our vineyards. And I was very angry when I heard their cry and  
 7 these words. Then I consulted with myself, and contended with the nobles and the rulers,  
 and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I held a great assembly  
 8 against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the  
 Jews, which were sold unto the heathen ; and would ye even sell your brethren, and should  
 9 they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found never a word. Also I said, The  
 thing that ye do is not good : ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the  
 10 reproach of the heathen our enemies? And I likewise, my brethren and my servants, do lend  
 11 them money and corn on usury. I pray you, let us leave off this usury. Restore, I pray  
 you, to them, even this day, their fields, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses,  
 also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of  
 12 them. Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them ; so will we  
 do, even as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should  
 13 do according to this promise. Also I shook out my lap, and said, So God shake out every  
 man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise ; even thus be he  
 shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And  
 14 the people did according to this promise. Moreover from the time that I was appointed to  
 be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and  
 thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that is*, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten  
 15 the bread of the governor. But the former governors that were before me were chargeable  
 unto the people, and took of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver ; yea, even  
 16 their servants bare rule over the people : but so did not I, because of the fear of God. Yea,  
 also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land : and all my servants  
 17 were gathered thither unto the work. Moreover there were at my table of the Jews and the  
 rulers an hundred and fifty men, beside those that came unto us from among the heathen that  
 18 were round about us. Now that which was prepared for one day was one ox and six choice  
 sheep ; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine : yet  
 for all this I demanded not the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy upon  
 19 this people. Remember unto me, O my God, for good, all that I have done for this people.

**Chap. 5 : 1-13.** *A chapter on the poor and the rich.* This has a theme peculiarly its own, unlike that of any other in the Bible—the *mutual relations of the rich and poor*, in a season of general scarcity. Here in Judea were dearth, suffering for bread and complaints of the poor against their richer brethren. The poor came to Nehemiah ; “ there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brethren.” Some with large families could not fill so many mouths ; some had mortgaged everything for bread ; some had borrowed to pay state taxes ; some had been obliged to sell sons and daughters into slavery, and had no means to redeem them because their lands too were gone for debt. And they could not tell this sad tale without suggesting that their children were of their own flesh and blood—as dear to them as sons and daughters were to their richer brethren who had been buying and selling their neighbors' children. Nehemiah heard this with sorrow and indignation. He “ was

very angry when he heard their cry in these words." He thought the case over; he rebuked those rich men for their oppressive usury; he brought face to face before them the many who were suffering so cruelly under their oppressions. He thought proper to speak of his own case: We have done all we could to redeem our Jewish brethren from personal slavery to foreign slave-holders; but ye are enslaving your own brethren. They could say nothing in reply. He said: Ye bring on us the reproach of our enemies; this is a disgrace to our religion and to the God we worship. I pray you, restore to your brethren those lands, those enslaved children, and that exorbitant interest—"the hundredth part"—one per cent (payable monthly, we must presume—equal to twelve per cent per annum), which ye have charged, not for money loaned merely, but for corn—the necessaries of life. We may rejoice to see that they responded promptly—"We will restore, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest." But lest second thought should bring on the grip of covetousness again, Nehemiah called in the priests to administer the sacred oath that they should fulfil this promise. Also to add the force of his own noble heart, he shook his lap and said, "So God shake out every man from his house and from his labor" (all the fruits of it) "who performs not this promise." There was some public feeling there, for all the congregation cried, "Amen; and praised the Lord." H. C.

The chief causes of poverty were three: (1) Overpopulation (verse 2); (2) a recent famine (verse 3); and (3) the weight of taxation, arising from the large amount annually demanded from the province by the Persians in the way of tribute (verse 4). The entire result was that the poorer classes were compelled, first of all, to mortgage their houses and such lands as they possessed (verse 3), and secondly to pledge the persons of their sons and daughters (verse 5), in order to raise money, with the near prospect of having to allow them to become slaves if they were unable to repay their creditor at the time appointed. Under these circumstances they appealed to the new governor for relief. The appeal placed him in a position of great difficulty. He was not rich enough to take upon himself the whole burden; and though he himself and his brothers and personal attendants did lend freely, out of their private store, money and grain (verse 10), yet this was far from being enough. On the other hand, it was impossible for him, under the Persian system of government, to carry matters with a high

hand and order a general cancelling of debts. He could only have recourse to persuasion, argument and personal influence. He therefore, first of all, spoke to the "nobles," who were the money-lenders, rebuked them, and endeavored to induce them to desist from their malpractices (verse 7); but failing to produce in this way any considerable effect, he brought the matter before an assembly of the people. There he first shamed the nobles by alleging his own contrary example, and then called on them, "for the fear of God and because of the reproach of the heathen," to restore the forfeited lands and houses to their former owners, repay all that they had received in the way of interest on the money lent, and give up the entire practice of lending money upon pledge or mortgage (verses 7-11). Moved by this public appeal, the nobles intimated their consent, whereupon he made them clinch their promise by an oath (verse 12), adding on his own part a malediction if the oath were not observed, which was hailed with acclaim by the people. Thus the whole matter was brought to a happy conclusion—the promise made was kept—"the people"—*i.e.*, the whole nation, nobles included, "did according to this word" (verse 13). P. C.

"The people," we are told, "did according to this promise." The poor, who had been deprived of them, re-entered on their lands, their vineyards, their olive-yards and their houses. Whatever interest they had paid on the money which they had borrowed was repaid them; if any interest was owed doubtless it was remitted. We are not told expressly whether anything was done to relieve those who had pledged their persons, or the persons of their sons or daughters. But it is impossible to suppose that they did not share in the general remission of obligations. If the observance of the sabbatical year was not yet restored, it was on the point of restoration (Neh. 10: 31). Probably all who had served their masters six years as slaves were now allowed to go free, in accordance with Ex. 21: 2. The remainder were given to understand that they would not have to serve beyond the sexennial period. G. R.

In an argument to show that the Agrarian law of Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy could not have been an afterthought of these latest times, Milman says: "We cannot understand the promulgation of this law of landed property, with all these singular provisions, after the total dislocation and disorganization of that property during the kingdom and the Exile and after the return from the Exile." B.

7. The question was not what is allowable between man and man in transactions, but what was right, at a period of national distress, between members of the commonwealth of Israel. To exact usury of a brother or countryman was contrary to the express law of Moses; and it was quite at variance with the constitution which God had given to Israel, that the landed possessions of families should be wrested from them in their temporary depression, and that the soil of Palestine should be concentrated in the hands of a few hard-hearted usurers. D. F.

9. **Also I said.** To silence the nobles was not enough. To shame them was not enough. What was wanted was to persuade them. Nehemiah therefore continued his address. *It is not good that ye do.* It is not good in itself, apart from any contrast with what I have been doing. *Ought ye not to walk*—or, literally, “will ye not walk”—*in the fear of our God?* Will ye not really “fear God and keep His commandments,” not in the letter only, but in the spirit? Will ye not cease to oppress your brethren? Will ye not deal kindly and gently with them? *Because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies.* If the mere fear of God, the desire to escape His displeasure and win His approval, is not enough, will not the thought of the light in which you will appear to the heathen influence you? You make a profession of religion; you claim to be actuated by high motives; to be merciful, compassionate and self-denying. If they see you as keen after gain as any of themselves, as regardless of others, as pitiless and oppressive, what a reproach will not this bring on your religion! What a proof will it not seem to be that you are no better than your neighbors, and your religion, therefore, no whit superior to theirs! P. C. —Who can resist this sweet and sovereign reprehension? Did we dwell alone in the midst of the earth, yet the fear of our God should overawe our ways; but now that we dwell in the midst of our enemies, whose eyes are bent upon all our actions, whose tongues are as ready to blaspheme God as we to offend Him, how carefully should we avoid those sins which may draw shame upon our profession! Thus shall religion suffer more from the heathen than our brethren do from us. *Bp. H.*

12. **Then they said, We will restore them.** Nehemiah prevailed, and brought about a “day of sacrifices.” The nobles, one and all, agreed not only to give back the interest that they had illegally received on the corn and money borrowed of them, but to restore the

forfeited lands and houses, which must have been of far greater value, and to which they were by law fully entitled. “We will restore them,” they said, “and will (in future) require nothing of them, neither interest nor security, but will do as thou sayest.” The promise was sweeping in its terms, and probably not insincere; but Nehemiah mistrusted all sudden impulses. He would have something more than a promise. *Then called I the priests, and took an oath of them* (the nobles), *that they should do according to this promise—i.e.,* he swore the nobles, in the sacred presence of the priests, to the performance of the promise which they had made.

13. **Also I shook my lap.** Even the taking of the oath did not seem sufficient to the prudent governor. He would strengthen the oath by a malediction, and a malediction accompanied by a symbolical act, to render it the more impressive. Among the nations of antiquity few things were so much dreaded as falling under a curse. The maledictions of De. 28: 16-44 were the supreme sanction which Moses devised for the Law, whereof he was the promulgator. Curses protected the tombs and inscriptions of the Assyrian and Persian kings, the contracts of the Babylonians, and the treaties of most nations. Nehemiah’s curse is an unusual one, but very clear and intelligible. He prays that whosoever departs from his promise given may be cast forth a homeless wanderer, emptied of all his possessions, as empty as the fold in his own dress, which he first gathers into a sort of bag or pocket, and then throws from him and so empties out. To this the assembly responded by a hearty “Amen,” and then praised the Lord for the happy ending of the whole affair; in which they piously traced the directing and overruling hand of God. P. C.

A great practical reformation was here carried out by a religious ruler on the highest religious principles, and by the strength of religious character. No more difficult task than to deal successfully with such circumstances in which men’s selfish interests were involved, and the moneyed classes would be against reform. Selfishness is not confined to any class. Those, however, who from their circumstances have acquired most of intelligence and culture, and have most power individually, may be expected to show a tender consideration for the feelings of the poor; they will be concerned for their elevation, improvement and salvation; they will not use their advantages selfishly or hardly (even though legally); they will not feel quite content to swell their own fortunes



by giving helpless people starvation wages, or lending money at rates ruinous to the borrower, merely because the law of "supply and demand" justifies them; their power will be used to rebuke, restrain and remedy oppression; to protect and aid the weak; to soften the inequalities of life by kindness and thoughtful charity; and, generally, to bless others rather than aggrandize themselves. In thus acting they will obey the dictates of prudence as well as those of Christianity, and will aid in uniting society by bonds which the strain of the most calamitous times will not burst asunder.

**14-19.** Nehemiah not unnaturally goes on to inform us of the methods by which in his general government he endeavored to alleviate the distress, or at any rate to avoid adding to the burdens which pressed upon the poorer classes. From the time that he entered upon his office, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, B.C. 444, to the time of his writing this portion of his Book, in the thirty-second year of the same king, B.C. 432, he had lived entirely at his own expense, requiring no contributions from the people, either in provisions or money, for the support of himself or his court (verse 14). This was quite contrary to the previous practice of Jewish governors (verse 15), and indeed of Oriental governors generally, whether under the Persian system or any other, such persons almost universally taxing their provinces, sometimes very heavily, for their current expenses, and often accumulating princely fortunes by their exactions. Nehemiah had also maintained a noble hospitality, of which he may be excused for being a little proud, during these twelve years of his governorship, entertaining daily at his table one hundred and fifty of the chief inhabitants of Jerusalem, besides many foreign Jews who from time to time came on visits to the Judean capital (verses 17, 18). He takes credit, further, for giving the services of his private attendants to the work of the wall during the whole time that it was in building (verse 16), and for having abstained from the purchase of any land, when, through the general poverty, it might have been bought at a low price from those who were anxious to part with it. He felt that he had done much for his people. He looked, however, for his reward not to them, not to man, but to God; and desired that his reward should be not present gratitude and thanks, but God's approval and remembrance only (verse 19). "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people." P. C.

He shows us what wealth can do when

wealth is consecrated to the service of God. His life rebukes the men who shut themselves up in their own selfish money-getting or money-hoarding, and never manifest any public spirit on behalf either of their country or the Church of God. He shows us, too, what may be done in a community by even one man of practical sagacity and energetic zeal—how such a man can stir up others by his example and his influence, and can carry out his plans for the common good, in spite of enemies without and croakers within. Let us then take a practical lesson from this patriot and reformer of the olden time. Let us not shut ourselves up in our own individual and domestic interests. Let us extend our sympathies and efforts and see what we can do according to the special needs of our own time to serve God and man in our day and generation. *T. Finlayson.*

**15. So did not I, because of the fear of God.** How, in this example, is afresh delineated the essence and the value of that upright fear of God, which has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come! In Nehemiah the fear of God has become, in the fullest sense of the term, a life-principle, which not merely incites to all that is good and noble, but also restrains from much, which every one else would certainly have permitted himself. How *all-powerful* is a principle which can place itself as a wall between the man and every forbidden tree, and make him draw back, for God's sake, when everything calls to him, "Hold fast!" The fear of God makes Nehemiah not merely look to himself, but in the midst of resistance and misjudgment watch and care for others with a fidelity which has never been surpassed. Only read how much good this one man accomplished for thousands around him; see him incite the languid, part disputants, disperse foes, only and at all times for God's sake; and say if the world would be a loser if the life-principle of Nehemiah were more generally adopted. How much better would be our age, our land, our society, if men of such principles, characters like these, were more to be met with in every circle! Many good deeds are done, but how much from self-interest; many evil things are refrained from, but how much from fear of man, or from want of opportunity! How few have the courage, like Nehemiah, to call sin, sin; and to be afraid of nothing but the displeasure of God! *Van O.*

The loftiest motive may regulate the smallest duties. Religious principle, as we call it in our abstract way, or "the fear of God," as Nehe-

miah called it, may interpenetrate, *will* interpenetrate and run through all life, and find a field for its noblest exercise in the midst of commonplace and secular duties! Wheresoever that principle is strong and vigorous, a man will have to make up his mind to sturdy non-compliance, to dare to be singular, to be unlike the maxims and examples of the people round about him, and every good man will have to make up his mind to give up a great many sources of gain and profit and pleasure and advantage for no more tangible reason than because a more sensitive conscience makes that which other men can do without winking, if I may so say, a crime intolerable to him.

*You cannot resist the evil around you unless you give yourselves to God.* "So did not I, because of the fear of God." The fear of God in the Old Testament corresponds precisely to the more fully developed faith and love to Christ, who is the express image of the Divine person and the communicator to us of the Divine strength, upon whom we have to cast ourselves! God in Christ, trusted in, loved, revered, obeyed, imitated—God in Christ alone strengthens a man for this resistance and non-compliance! No man can stand in the slippery places where we have to go, unless he have the grasp of a higher and stronger hand to keep him up. No man will ever for a lifetime resist and repel the domination of evil unless he is girded about with the purity of Jesus Christ, as an atmosphere in which all poisonous things fade and die, and through which no temptation can force its way. The only means for this steadfast resistance is a steadfast faith in Jesus as our Saviour. He has assured us that He will give us the victory. "Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." In the strength of this promise I have the right to come to the feeblest here and say, "However you may be encompassed by evil, however you may be drawn aside by evil example and harming associations, however difficult to may be for you to keep your footing in the midst of the rush and swirl of that great tide of sin, here is a hand that you may grasp, and His grasp will make you strong."

*Nothing will go right unless you dare to be singular.* "So did not I." The chief field for the exercise of this resolute non-compliance with common practice is in the region of moral action in the daily conduct of your lives. 1. He who yields is wrecked and ruined. The absolute necessity for this sturdy resistance is plain from the very make of our own natures. It is enforced if we think of the order of things

in which we dwell. It is chiefly enforced by the fact that every one of us is thrown more or less closely into contact with people who themselves are living as they should not, and who would fain drag us after them. 2. Remember that not only does easy yielding to such enticements bring all sorts of moral confusion and failure into a man's life, but that such compliance is in itself weak and unworthy. Surely there is nothing that walks the earth more contemptible, as well as more certainly evil, than a man that lets himself be made by whatever force may happen to be strongest near him, and fastening up his helm and unshipping his oars, is content to be blown about by every vagrant wind and rolled in the trough of each curling wave. 3. Another very solemn consideration may be suggested, enforcing the need of this vigorous non-compliance with the temptations around us, from the remembrance of what a poor excuse for wrong-doing they will be found to be at last.

For us all, in every period of life, the necessity is the same. We must learn to say "No." We must dare, if need be, to be singular. Like the young Joseph, when you are tempted astray by seducing voices, let your answer be, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Like the young Daniel, when forbidden pleasures and questionable delights are urged upon your appetites, be "purposed in" your "heart that" you "will not defile" yourself with them, and choose pulse and water with the relish of a good conscience rather than such dainties. Like the same Daniel, when the crowd are flocking at the sound of the sackbut and psaltery to worship some golden image, keep your knees unbent amid the madness, learn to stand erect though you alone are upright in the midst of a grovelling multitude, and protest, "We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Like Nehemiah, dare to lose money rather than adopt sources of profit which others may use without a thought, but which your conscience shrinks from; and to all the various enticements of pleasure and gain and ease and popular loose maxims for the conduct, oppose immovable resistance founded on a higher law and a mightier motive—"So did not I, because of the fear of God." A. M.

19. Lastly, he concludes with a prayer, Think upon me, my God, for good. Nehemiah here mentions what he had done for this people, not in pride, as boasting of himself, nor in passion, as upbraiding them, not does it appear that he had occasion to do it in his own vindication, as

Paul had to relate his like self-denying tenderness toward the Corinthians, but to shame the rulers out of their oppressions; let them learn of him to be neither greedy in their demands nor paltry in their expenses, and then they would have the credit and comfort of it, as he had. He mentions it to God in prayer, not as if he thought he had hereby merited any favor from God as a debt, but to show that he looked not for any recompense of his generosity from men, but depended upon God only to make up to him what he had lost and laid out for His honor; and he reckoned the favor of God reward enough. "If God do but think upon me for good, I have enough." His thoughts to usward are our happiness (Ps. 40:5). He refers himself to God, to recompense him in such a manner as He pleased. "If men forget me, let my God think on me, and I desire no more." H.

Study this character thoroughly as we may, the more it is studied *this fact* will stand forth in the bolder relief, *that its actuating ruling force is a principled fear of God.* Because of this principled fear of God, he was a man of *faith*. Recognizing God as the God of heaven, as ruling in and concerned with the affairs of men, as the great and just God, yet the God that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His Commandments, he trusted alone in Him. He believed that God was able to move the hearts of king and of people—able to thwart the designs and efforts of combined enemies, however subtle, numerous or powerful—able to succeed any right purpose of whatever magnitude, though conceived and undertaken by a single feeble man. And his faith was proven by his deeds, proven as well as rewarded by his success in a work so vast.

Because of this principled fear of God, he was a *man of prayer*. Recognizing God as over and in all events, believing that God could and would counsel and direct in every plan wisely conceived and singly, faithfully engaged in, that God could and would ensure the execution of such plan in its *least* details, with the simplest, most childlike utterance, at every step, in every juncture in which he was placed, we see him praying to the God he feared and trusted. Nowhere, in the Bible history, do we see the God-fearing spirit illustrated by greater simplicity and minuteness in supplication. Before he sought the king—in the king's presence—when he left that presence, on his journey and arrival at Jerusalem, and daily onward

in doing his good work, repeated expressions assure us that he lived and acted in the closest communion with God, pouring out his very heart in constant prayer.

Because of this principled fear of God, he was a *man of action*. The spirit that believed and prayed did not passively wait to see done by miracle what he knew God could do by *him*. Never was the impelling force of faith, never was the inspiring energy of heart-moved living prayer more effectively illustrated than in the intense, unwearied activity of this man in singly achieving that which devotion and patriotism had prompted him to undertake. A people long demoralized by anarchy among themselves and the tyranny of their neighbor heathen nations had to be reorganized and re-inspired. Their long-dormant patriotism and piety had to be awakened. Courage and energy had to be infused into their depressed and slothful spirits. And these qualities had to be kept alive for weeks under the most adverse circumstances of temptation and trial, through days of severest toil and nights of sleepless vigilance, amid the taunts, the wiles and the threats of foes gathered on every side. Yet the energy of this man of faith and prayer was equal to this work; it slackened not till the work was done, till the city was rebuilt, the government restored, and the people delivered from suffering and oppression from within and without.

A yet further effect of his principled fear of God was his *patriotism, his just love of his own people and land*. There is a love of country based upon the mere fact of birth and the feeling of personal partnership in national blessings and national glory—a love created in part by self-interest, fostered and perpetuated by the memory of a people's past deeds and associations and the promise or possibility of their future achievements. *This* love, which belongs mainly to elevated minds, which, as all history shows, outlives a nation's prosperity, *this* love is worthy of, it has always won, high admiration of men. But when there enters into this the idea that *nations* as individuals exist by God's appointment, for His glory *in* man's welfare, when in a particular nation's history there are visible tokens of God's especial favor, indications that He has designed such nation to be His agent for peculiar blessing to men, then the soul that recognizes, fears and trusts God finds in these tokens and indications a yet broader, firmer foundation for love of country—the quality of his love is higher and more just. The narrative of Nehe-

miah shows that such was his love, that it had such a broad, firm basis. He loved his people and land because they were his, because of the distinguished and useful history they had wrought. But he loved chiefly because he recognized God as having shaped this history, as having established the nation and ordered its career for good to itself and other nations, and *in, over all, for His own glory upon earth.* *Therefore, because he believed that God had a work still to be accomplished by his people, because he believed that God had not turned away His favor utterly from them, because he believed that there were in God's heart thoughts of mercy toward his scattered, broken people, therefore his strong love incited and constrained him to pray and labor for their peace and prosperity. B.*

## Section 62.

OPPOSITION BY CRAFT AND INTIMIDATION. WALL COMPLETED. HANANI PUT IN CHARGE. SECOND REGISTER OF RETURNED JEWS.

NEHEMIAH 6 : 1-19 ; 7 : 1-73.

6 : 1 Now it came to pass, when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah, and to Geshem the Arabian, and unto the rest of our enemies, that I had builded the wall, and that there was 2 no breach left therein ; (though even unto that time I had not set up the doors in the gates ;) that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in *one of* the villages 3 in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down : why should the work cease, 4 whilst I leave it, and come down to you? And they sent unto me four times after this sort ; 5 and I answered them after the same manner. Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like 6 manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand ; wherein was written, It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel ; for which 7 cause thou buildest the wall : and thou wouldest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah : and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now there- 8 fore, and let us take counsel together. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such 9 things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all would have made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. But now, *O God*, strengthen thou my hands.

10 And I went unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabel, who was shut up ; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple : for they will come to slay thee ; yea, in the night will they 11 come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being 12 such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And I discerned, and, lo, God had not sent him : but he pronounced this prophecy against me : and Tobiah and 13 Sanballat had hired him. For this cause was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and 14 sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and also the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

15 So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day of the month* Elul, in fifty and two 16 days. And it came to pass, when all our enemies heard *thereof*, that all the heathen that were about us feared, and were much cast down in their own eyes : for they perceived that this 17 work was wrought of our God. Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many 18 letters unto Tobiah, and *the letters of* Tobiah came unto them. For there were many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son in law of Shecaniah the son of Arah ; and his 19 son Jehohanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah to wife. Also

they spake of his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

7 : 1 Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the 2 porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, that I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the governor of the castle, charge over Jerusalem : for he was a faithful man, and 3 feared God above many. And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot ; and while they stand *on guard*, let them shut the doors, and bar ye them : and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and 4 every one *to be over against* his house. Now the city was wide and large : but the people 5 were few therein, and the houses were not builded. And my God put into my heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and I found written therein :

*Verses 6-73 omitted because nearly identical with Ezra 2 : 1-70. Points of variation noted in place.*

6 : 1-19. *Secret proceedings of Sanballat and his friends to hinder the building of the wall, and their failure. The wall completed.*

6 : 1-9. When it was found that Nehemiah's arrangements for guarding the wall (chap. 4 : 13-23) were such that success was not likely to attend the employment of force by the confederates, and the idea of an assault was therefore given up, recourse was had to artifice and intrigue. First of all, Sanballat sent to propose a meeting between himself, Geshem and Nehemiah in the open country about Ono, twenty-five or thirty miles from Jerusalem, hoping thus to draw him to a distance from his supporters, and intending to "do him a mischief" (verse 2). Nehemiah, who perceived the snare, declined ; but Sanballat persisted, and made four other proposals for conferences, probably varying the place, but all without avail. On the fifth and last occasion the letter sent to Nehemiah was an open one, and taxed him with an intention to rebel and make himself king, an intention which was sure to come to the ears of Artaxerxes, and would bring the Jews into trouble. Nehemiah, however, was not to be intimidated or diverted from his purpose. He protested that the charge made against him was a pure calumny, invented by Sanballat himself, and still declined a conference (verse 8). Hereupon intrigues began between Sanballat and Tobiah, on the one hand, and some of Nehemiah's subjects, on the other. P. C.

Sanballat and his friends offer a good text from which to preach a sermon on the successive stages in which a feeling of opposition to God's work develops itself. When Nehemiah came to attempt something for Israel, they disliked it exceedingly. When it was decided to build, they mocked and slandered the builders (2 : 19). When the work was actually begun, they ridiculed it without measure (4 : 1-3).

When it had reached a decided stage of progress, they made serious fight against it (4 : 8). After they failed in this, they continued to work against it by treachery and intrigue (Neh. 6). W. J. B.

3. "The God of heaven, He will prosper us ; therefore we His servants will arise and build," was the sentiment with which he girded himself to his task ; and it was in this mighty confidence that he prosecuted the work, undismayed by threats, unembarrassed by plots, in nowise disheartened by difficulties or disappointments. His noble steadfastness of resolution was manifest throughout his career. He had counted the cost, he had made up his mind ; his decision was unwavering, and he carried it out with unflinching energy. There is a surpassing moral grandeur in the reply which he sent to Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of his enemies, when they said to him, "Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono." He transmitted to them this magnanimous message, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down ; why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you?" It needs only that you should study his history, to perceive how this sublime determination of spirit pervaded the whole of his course. Whatever his hand found to do, he did it with his might ; whatever he resolved to win, he never ceased till he had won it ; whatever he determined to encounter, he never failed to overcome *Stowell*.

It is a poor eye that does not see something greater than pleasure in the horizon of life. Conscience, duty, righteousness are far loftier things than success, prosperity, pleasure. He who keeps his eye steadily on the prize of his high calling will not easily be seduced by the siren sisters and their enchanting music. It was a splendid answer Nehemiah gave to San-

ballat and his people when they would have had him meet them in the plain of Ono: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." Let us ever keep in mind the great work of the Christian life, and refuse every solicitation from within as well as from without that would make us let it alone, or be slack in performing it. Enjoyment will come to us in the very act of fulfilling the purpose of life; and when, as is quite legitimate, we "drink of the brook by the way," the effect will not be to enfeeble and paralyze us, but to brace us for more activity and bring to us the greater success. W. G. B.

6. Sanballat's servant comes now, the fifth time, with an opened letter importing dangerous intimations, wherein is written, "It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that the Jews think to rebel; for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king." "It is reported:" and what falsehood may not plead this warrant? What can be more lying than report? "Among the heathen:" and who is more ethnic than Sanballat? What pagan can be worse than a mongrel idolater? "And Gashmu saith it:" "Ask my fellow else." This Arabian was one of those three heads of all the hostile combination against Jerusalem, against Nehemiah. It would be wide with innocence if enemies might be allowed to accuse. "That the Jews think to rebel:" a stale suggestion, but once powerful. Malice hath learned to miscall all actions. Where the hands cannot be taxed, very thoughts are prejudged: "For which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king." He was never true Israelite, that hath not passed spiteful slanders and misconstructions. *Bp. H.*

8, 9. They were, no doubt, prepared for his indignant reply to Sanballat—"There are no such things done as thou sayest; but thou feignest them out of thine own heart" (verse 8). But they calculated that the charge which they had made in an *open* letter would be bruited abroad, would alarm many of Nehemiah's own adherents, would "weaken his hands" (verse 9), perhaps shake his resolution, and, above all, would raise suspicions with respect to his fidelity in the breast of the Great King. G. R.

9. In the midst of his complaint of their malice, in endeavoring to frighten him, and so weaken his hands, he lifts up his heart to heaven in this short prayer, Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. It is the great support and relief of good people, that in all their straits and difficulties they have a good God to go to, from whom, by faith and prayer,

they may fetch in grace to silence their fears and strengthen their hands, when their enemies are endeavoring to fill them with fears and weaken their hands. When, in our Christian work and warfare, we are entering upon any particular services or conflicts, this is a good prayer for us to put up, "I have such a duty to do, such a temptation to grapple with; now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands." Christian fortitude will be sharpened by opposition. Every temptation to draw us from our duty should quicken us so much the more to duty and to prayer. H.

10-13. They next resolved to work upon his fears by the instrumentality of his own professed and seeming friends. There was a certain Shemaiah, who claimed to be a Jehovistic prophet, and was allied with other members of the prophetic order, and particularly with a prophetess of repute named Noadiah (verse 14). Sanballat and Tobiah bribed this person (verse 12), and induced him to become their tool and instrument. They bade him assure Nehemiah that a plot existed to assassinate him, and deliver him a solemn message, as from God, that there was one way only by which he could save his life—he must withdraw himself from the work in which he was engaged and secretly take refuge in the Temple building, where alone he could be safe. Shemaiah was probably a priest, and therefore had access to the sacred edifice—he proposed to meet Nehemiah there (verse 10), and suggested that they should close the doors against intruders, and remain in hiding till the danger was past. Noadiah and the other *soi-disant* prophets made similar representations (verse 14). But again Nehemiah's constancy and courage withstood the strain to which they were put. Plot or no plot, he would not take the course recommended; he felt that it would be unworthy of him. "Should such a man," he said, "as I flee?" (verse 11). Can I, the governor, the head of the state, to whom all look for direction, take to flight, leave my post, hide myself? Assuredly not—not even to save my life. And would my life be saved, if I followed the advice tendered me? Would it not rather be forfeited? "Who is there, that, being as I" (*i. e.*, a layman), "would go into the Temple to save his life?" or, "could go into the Temple and live?" Any "stranger," not of the seed of Aaron, who entered the sanctuary, was by the Law (Num. 18: 7) to be put to death. Thus once more Nehemiah, trusting little to advisers, but much to his own sense of right, by following the plain path of duty avoided the trap set for him. G. R.

Shemalah's real design appears to have been not only to disgrace Nehemiah and dishearten the people, when they saw the cowardice of their governor (verse 13), but also to prepare the way for an assault of the enemy on the city when there was no leader to oppose them. *Stackhouse*.—His design was not to serve but to ensnare Nehemiah; to shake his strong confidence in the protection of God, and beguile him into doubtful and dastardly expedients; that so the hands of the workmen might be weakened in their work, and the enemies of Israel have occasion to reproach the leader of the people, as having been entangled like a bird in the snare of the fowler. But holy courage has always heavenly wisdom for her companion. Nehemiah, therefore, penetrating the hypocrisy of the tempter, and lending no fond ear to the whispers of a faithless expediency, answered with sublime serenity, "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that, being as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? I will not go in." *Stowell*.

And what if Nehemiah had hearkened to this counsel? Sin and shame had followed. That holy place was for none but persons sacred—such as were privileged by blood and function; others should presume and offend in entering. And now what would the people say? "What shall become of us while our governor hides his head for fear? Where shall we find a temple to secure us? What do we depending upon a cowardly leader?" Well did Nehemiah forecast these circumstances, both of act and event; and therefore, resolving to distrust a prophet that persuaded him to the violation of a law, he rejects the motion with scorn: "Should such a man as I flee? Should I go into the Temple to save my life? I will not go." *Bp. H.*

Nehemiah was engaged in a great work; his God was with him and gave him success; friends and enemies united against him; by base insinuation, craft and stratagem they strove to dishearten and deter him from going on with God's work. Opposition is the Christian's lot; courage his honor; perseverance his jewel. Look at this man of God: he boldly repels all fear. Instead of fleeing from his work as advised, he flees to his God, and cries, "O God, strengthen my hands" (verse 9). Faith inspires prayer; prayer brings courage to the heart; then he boldly demands, *Should such a man as I flee?* A man so greatly favored, so highly honored as to be employed by God to work for Him? No; I disdain such mean cowardice; I will work on; it is God's cause; let

Him order the event; I fear it not. Christian, your calling is to work for God; expect opposition from within and without. This may call up fear and dismay; but consider your dignity; maintain and assert it. "Should such a man as I flee?" A man called by the grace of Jesus to resist the devil, to face carnal men, to vanquish sin, to overcome the world, to obtain victory over death and to receive a crown of righteousness in endless glory—shall I flee? What, I who am called to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus? O, my soul, put on Christ and put off fear; put up prayer and put down dread! *W. Mason*.

14. He does not revengefully imprecate any particular judgment upon his enemies, but refers the matter to God. "Thou knowest their hearts, and art the avenger of falsehood and wrong; take cognizance of this cause, judge between me and them, and take what way and time Thou pleasest to call them to an account for it." Whatever injuries are done us, we must not avenge ourselves, but commit our cause to Him that judgeth righteously. *H.*

15. Nehemiah's vigilance anticipated every difficulty, his prudent measures defeated every obstruction, and with astonishing rapidity Jerusalem was made again "a city fortified." *Jamieson*.—The work on the city walls was at length finished joyfully, having occupied fifty-two days—pushed with untiring diligence and the energy of a noble enthusiasm. We shall meet a somewhat extended account of the joyous dedication of these walls below (chap. 12: 27-43). *H. C.*

Fifty-two days from July 25th would bring him to September 15th, which corresponds, as nearly as may be, to the 25th of Elul. There is no difficulty in supposing that the wall could have been repaired in this space. The materials were ready at hand; the working parties were numerous; the workmen full of zeal. If we estimate the circumference of the wall at four miles, which is probably beyond the truth, and the working parties at forty-two (*Ewald*), it will follow that each party had, on the average, to repair one hundred and eighty-six yards, or at the rate of between three and four yards a day. There was probably no work done on the Sabbaths, and there may have been one or two days of interruption, when attack seemed imminent (chap. 4: 13-15); but otherwise the work was carried on without pause from early dawn to dark. *P. C.*

Nehemiah's narrative is thoroughly consistent with itself, and contains in it nothing that is improbable. He represents the walls as

everywhere existing at the time that he commenced his task, and as only needing repairs. He states that the work was partitioned among at least thirty-seven working parties, who labored simultaneously. He shows that the material for repairs was ready at hand in the *débris* of the walls which lay at their base (2 : 14 ; 4 : 2). He explains how, notwithstanding all menaces, the workmen labored uninterruptedly. There can be no doubt that a dismantled fortress as large as Jerusalem—*i.e.*, less than four miles in circumference, has often been put into a state of defence in a shorter time than fifty-two days.

**16. They perceived that this work was wrought of our God.** The hand of God was traceable (1) in the favorable disposition of Artaxerxes toward a work on which he might naturally have looked with jealousy (see chap. 1 : 11 ; 2 : 4) ; and (2) in the failure of all attempts to intimidate or deceive Nehemiah. B. C.

**17.** During all this time, Nehemiah adds, the stratagems of our professed enemies were not so dangerous as the treachery and baseness of many of our own citizens. Some of these having married into Tobiah's family (chap. 13 : 4-9), espoused his interests both secretly and openly, and informed him of all we said and did ; so that well might that haughty heathen threaten me with his letters when he knew there were people within our own walls who would second him in all his designs. *Pyle.*

**7 : 1-69.** The entire work being at length accomplished, it devolved upon him to make the necessary arrangements for the security of what had now become a first-rate fortress. Accordingly, he seems himself to have assigned the guard of the gates to certain bodies of Levites (verse 1), as being experienced in the business of keeping watch ; after which he committed the task of appointing other guards to his brother Hanani and to a certain Hananiah, already the commandant of the Birah, or Temple tower (verse 2). They devised a system by which the adult male inhabitants were made to partition the watch of the wall among themselves, each on the part which was nearest to his own house (verse 3). At the same time, it was ordered, for greater precaution, that all the gates should be closed at night, and none of them opened "until the sun *was hot*" (*ibid.*)—*i.e.*, until some hours after sunrise. The city was thus made as secure as the circumstances admitted ; but in the course of the arrangements it became clear, at any rate to Nehemiah, that the population of the city was too scanty

for its size (verse 4), and that some steps ought to be taken to augment the number of inhabitants. As a first step, a necessary preliminary before he could lay any definite proposal before the "rulers," the governor thought it necessary to make a census of the entire people (verse 5). It seems to have been in the course of his preparations for this purpose that he "found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first." The list in verses 7-69 has been regarded as the result of his own census ; but it would seem to be most probable that we have the actual result of Nehemiah's census, so far as he thought fit to give it to us, in chap. 11 : 3-36. P. C.

**1-3.** No sooner were the walls finished, the gate-towers completed and the gates hung in them, than he proceeded to create an organization for the continual defence of the gates and walls by a guard or garrison. To the Levites generally, together with the Temple porters and singers, the special duty of keeping watch, and ward continually was assigned (Neh. 7 : 1) ; and further, the citizens were required to organize a civil guard, which should come on duty at nightfall, should see the town-gates shut and barred, watch the walls over against their houses, and in the morning see that the gates were not opened too early. In the East it is usual to make sunrise the time for opening ; Nehemiah required that the gates of Jerusalem should be kept shut "till the sun *was hot*" (*ibid.*, verse 3)—*i.e.*, till eight or nine o'clock. This was an extraordinary precaution, intended probably to meet attempts at surprise on the part of Sanballat and his friends, who were regarded as capable of any act, however treacherous, which might seem likely to serve their purpose. Finally, that there might be persons whose duty it should be to see that the system of defence thus inaugurated should be constantly kept up, and not allowed to fall into desuetude, Nehemiah appointed two military commandants to take charge of the town. These were his brother Hanani, who had returned from Susa (Neh. 1 : 1, 2) to Jerusalem, and a certain Hananiah—"a faithful man, and one who feared God above many" (7 : 2), who had hitherto been governor of the fortress. G. R.

**4-73.** This genealogical table of the first company of returning Jews (substantially the same as in Ezra 2) may be brought out here in connection with measures for filling up the city—its population being entirely too sparse for the best interest of the entire colony. We shall see more on this subject in chaps. 11 and



12. H. C.—*The increase of the population of the city was a matter of pressing importance ; for the ample space within the walls was very sparsely occupied with houses, and thinly inhabited. Before resolving, however, on the steps to be taken, it occurred to Nehemiah (and he regarded the suggestion as from God) to call a general assembly, that he might make a census of the population, as a basis for further measures. The result does not appear until chap. 11. P. C.*

**5. My God put into mine heart.** As Nehemiah contemplated the vast empty spaces within the city walls, and considered with himself how they might best be peopled, the thought came to him—and he hailed it as a Divine inspiration—that by taking a census of the people he might pave the way for some transfer of the inhabitants of the country districts into the capital, which would at any rate strengthen the latter, and lessen the desolate appearance of its streets and squares, which had so pained him. The census would show what proportion the country and town populations bore to each other, and would point out which were the places in the country districts that could best afford to lose a portion of their inhabitants. A census therefore was resolved upon, and, according to ordinary Jewish usage (Num. 1 : 17-47; 1 Chron. 21 : 5, 6; Ezra 2 : 3-62), it was genealogical.

**6-73.** *The register of those who returned under Zerubbabel, with the number of their slaves, beasts and oblations.* It is no doubt a curious circumstance that this list should occur twice, with no important differences, in the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The double record enables us to make out a more perfect catalogue than we could have obtained from either separately, since there are corruptions in each which may be corrected by means of the other. P. C.—This section is identical with Ezra 2 : 1-3 : 1, word for word, and letter for letter, except in two points—viz., the numbers repeatedly vary ; and there is a difference in the account of the offerings made by the governor, the nobles and the people. The heading, the contents, the narrative about the sons of Barzillai, the fact of the offerings, the dwelling in their cities, the coming of the seventh month, the gathering of

all the people to Jerusalem as one man, are in words and in sense the very self-same passage. The idea that the very same words, extending to seventy verses, describe different events, is simply absurd and irrational. The numbers, therefore, must originally have been the same in both books. But when we examine the varying numbers, we see the following particular proofs that the variations are corruptions of the original text. Though the items vary, the sum total, 42,360, is the same (Ezra 2 : 64; Neh. 7 : 66). In like manner the totals of the servants, the singing men and women, the horses, mules and asses, are all the same, except that Ezra has two hundred instead of two hundred and forty-five singing men and women. The numbers of the priests and the Levites are the same in both, except that the singers, the sons of Asaph, are one hundred and twenty-eight in Ezra, against one hundred and forty-eight in Nehemiah, and the porters one hundred and thirty-nine against one hundred and thirty-eight. Then in each particular case, when the numbers differ, we see plainly that the difference might arise from a copyist's error. *Dic. B.*

Bishop Kennicott's theory, that the three lists—that of Ezra, that of Nehemiah, and that in the first of Esdras—had all one original, and that the existing differences proceed entirely from mistakes of the copyists, is the only tenable one. It is especially remarkable that the differences in the numbers of the three lists consist chiefly in a single unit, a single ten, or a single hundred—or in a five ; less often in two units, or two tens, or two hundreds, or in a six—differences probably arising from the obliteration of one or two signs in a notation resembling the Roman or the Egyptian, where there are special signs for a thousand, a hundred, ten, five, and the unit, complex numbers being expressed by repetition of these, as 3438 in Latin inscriptions by MMMCCCXXXVIII. Any fading of a sign in such a notation as this causes a copyist to diminish the amount by one, five, ten, a hundred, a thousand, etc. A fading of two signs may produce a diminution of two thousand, two hundred, twenty, two ; or again of eleven hundred, one hundred and ten, one hundred and five, fifteen, eleven, six, and the like. P. C.

## Section 63.

## THE GREAT CONVOCATION FOR WORSHIP, CONFESSION, AND COVENANT.

NEHEMIAH 7 : 73<sup>a</sup> ; 8 ; 9 ; 10.

7 : 73 AND when the seventh month was come, the children of Israel were in their cities.

8 : 1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate ; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, 2 upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand ; and the ears of all the people were *attentive* 3 unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose ; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Uriah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand ; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, 4 and Malchijah, and Hashum, and Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people ; (for he was above all the people ; and when 5 he opened it, all the people stood up : and Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands : and they bowed 6 their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law : and the people 7 stood in their place. And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly ; and they gave 8 the sense, so that they understood the reading. And Nehemiah, which was the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God ; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, 9 when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared : for this day 10 is holy unto our Lord : neither be ye grieved ; for the joy of the LORD is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy ; neither be ye 11 grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

12 And on the second day were gathered together the heads of fathers' *houses* of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to give attention to the words 13 of the law. And they found written in the law, how that the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month : 14 and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and branches of wild olive, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. 15 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the 16 broad place of the water gate, and in the broad place of the gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and dwelt in the booths : for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children 17 of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven 18 days ; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the ordinance.

9 : 1 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were 2 assembled with fasting, and with sackcloth, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the in- 3 iquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God a fourth part of the day ; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and 4 worshipped the LORD their God. Then stood up upon the stairs of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, and Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud 5 voice unto the LORD their God. Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hediah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God from everlasting to everlasting : and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above 6 all blessing and praise. Thou art the LORD, even thou alone ; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas and all that is in them, and thou preservest them all ; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. 7 Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur 8 of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham ; and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Jebusite, and the Girgashite, even to give it unto his 9 seed, and hast performed thy words ; for thou art righteous. And thou sawest the affliction

10 of our fathers in Egypt, and hearest their cry by the Red Sea ; and shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land ; for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them ; and didst get thee a name, as it is this day.

11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land ; and their pursuers thou didst cast into the depths, as a stone into the 12 mighty waters. Moreover thou leddest them in a pillar of cloud by day ; and in a pillar of 13 fire by night, to give them light in the way wherein they should go. Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgements and true laws, good statutes and commandments : and madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandest them commandments, and statutes, and a law, by the hand 15 of Moses thy servant : and gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and commandest them that they should 16 go in to possess the land which thou hadst lifted up thine hand to give them. But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their neck, and hearkened not to thy commandments, and refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them ; but hardened their neck, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage : but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and full of compassion, slow to 18 anger, and plenteous in mercy, and forsookest them not. Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought 19 great provocations ; yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness : the pillar of cloud departed not from over them by day, to lead them in the way ; neither 20 the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldst not thy manna from their 21 mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing ; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled 22 not. Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and peoples, which thou didst allot after their portions : so they possessed the land of Sihon, even the land of the king of Heshbon, and 23 the land of Og king of Bashan. Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou didst say to their fathers, that 24 they should go in to possess it. So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the peoples of the land, that they might do with them as they 25 would. And they took fenced cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all good things, cisterns hewn out, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance : so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. 26 Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their back, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them again unto thee, and 27 they wrought great provocations. Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their adversaries, who distressed them : and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou hearest from heaven ; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them 28 saviours who saved them out of the hand of their adversaries. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee : therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them : yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou hearest from heaven ; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies ; and 29 testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law : yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgements, (which if a man do, he shall live in them,) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their 30 neck, and would not hear. Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit through thy prophets : yet would they not give ear : therefore 31 gavest thou them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless in thy manifold mercies thou didst not make a full end of them, nor forsake them ; for thou art a gracious 32 and merciful God. Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the travail seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.

33 Howbeit thou art just in all that is come upon us ; for thou hast dealt truly, but we have 34 done wickedly : neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst 35 testify against them. For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, 36 neither turned they from their wicked works. Behold, we are servants this day, and as for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it. And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast 37 set over us because of our sins : also they have power over our bodies, and over our cattle, 38 at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. And yet for all this we make a sure covenant, and write it ; and our princes, our Levites, and our priests, seal unto it.

10 : 1 Now those that sealed were, Nehemiah the Tirshatha, the son of Hacaliah, and Zedekiah, 2, 3, 4 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah ; Pashhur, Amariah, Malchijah ; Hattush, Shebaniah, 5, 6, 7 Malluch ; Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah ; Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch ; Meshullam, Abijah, 8, 9 Mijamin ; Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah : these were the priests. And the Levites : namely, 10 Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel ; and their brethren, 11, 12 Shebaniah, Hodiah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan ; Mica, Rehob, Hashabiah ; Zaccur, Sherebiah,

13, 14 Shebaniah; Hodiah, Bani, Beninu. The chiefs of the people: Parosh, Pahath-moab, 15, 16, 17 Elam, Zattu, Bani; Bunni, Azgad, Bebai; Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin; Ater, Hezekiah, 18, 19, 20 Azzur; Hodiah, Hashum, Bezai; Hariph, Anathoth, Nobai; Magpiash, Meshullam, 21, 22, 23 Meshezabel, Zadok, Jaddua; Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah; Hoshea, Hananiah, 24, 25, 26 Hasshub; Hallohesh, Pilha, Shobek; Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah; and Ahiah, 27, 28 Hanan, Anan; Malluch, Harim, Baanah. And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinim, and all they that had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one that had knowledge and understanding; they clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our LORD, and his judgements and his statutes; and that we would not give our daughters unto 30 the peoples of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: and if the peoples of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy of them on the sabbath, or on a holy day: and that we would forego the seventh year, and the exaction 32 of every debt. Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third 33 part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; for the shewbread, and for the continual meal offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make atone- 34 ment for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. And we cast lots, the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, according to our fathers' houses, at times appointed, year by year, to burn upon the altar of 35 the LORD our God, as it is written in the law: and to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and 36 the firstfruits of all fruit of all manner of trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the 37 house of our God: and that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our heave offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, the wine and the oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites; for they, the 38 Levites, take the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of 39 the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the heave offering of the corn, of the wine, and of the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

CHAPS. 8-10 constitute a section by themselves. This section might be entitled "An Account of the Great Convocation held under Nehemiah." It differs from the opening and closing parts of the book in that it speaks of Nehemiah in the third person (for example, Neh 8 : 9 ; 10 : 1), while they are written in his name in the first person. It records events closely connected with those of the first chapters, since they deal with the first six months (Neh. 6 : 15, etc.) of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, while this section is concerned with the events of the seventh month (Neh. 8 : 2, 13, 18 ; 9 : 1). These events are separated by an interval of from twelve years to many years from those mentioned in the later chapters of Nehemiah. The account was written long enough after the events to make it proper (Neh. 8 : 17) to say "that day." The interval thus required might be anywhere from a few days to many years. One marked literary phenomenon of the account is its alternating between the third person and the first person plural when it speaks of Nehemiah and his associates. In general, the narrative is in the third person, while the prayer in chap. 9 and the covenant engagements in chap. 10 are in the first person plural. But besides those parts

of the covenant that are given in the form of promises in the first person plural (Neh. 9 : 38 ; 10 : 29, last clause, 30-33, 35-39), another part is given in narrative form in the third person (Neh. 10 : 28, 29a); and still another part is given in narrative form in the first person plural (Neh. 10 : 34; but not 32, 33, 35, and 36, as in the English versions). These phenomena are most naturally accounted for by the hypothesis that the author was a participant in the events—that is, that he is either Nehemiah or some associate of his. There is no proof that Nehemiah himself did not write it. If he wrote it, he wrote it as a paper of an official nature, in which it was proper to speak of himself in the third person, and not in the first person singular, as in his memoirs.

This section describes a series of events of the greatest importance. Jewish and Christian tradition have much to say concerning the so-called Great Synagogue, to which many allege that we owe the completion and authentication of the Old Testament Scriptures. These traditions, whether we regard them as historical or legendary, radiate from this great convocation in Nehemiah's time. But we now have less to do with these than with one particular design which Nehemiah had in mind. His design was

to renew and enlarge the reforms which Ezra had begun thirteen years before, and especially the reform against marriages with foreign women. Evidently the work of Ezra had not proved a permanent success. Great disasters had followed it (Neh. 1 : 3, etc.), and such marriages were still in vogue (Neh. 6 : 18, etc.). Nehemiah intended to renew this reform. It is not necessary to say that this was his only, or even his chief object ; but it was an object that he never lost sight of. Chaps. 8-10 are an account of transactions running through twenty-four days or more, by which Nehemiah brought this and other reforms into active operation. The first part of the eighth chapter (1-12) tells what happened in one day—the first day of the seventh month (verse 2). The remainder of the chapter is the second part, giving an account of events from the second to the twenty-third days of the month (verses 18, 18). Chaps. 9 and 10 constitute the third part, giving an account of what was done the twenty-fourth day of the month. W. J. B.

*Outline of Events Narrated in Chaps. 8-10.*

On the first day of the month the people were gathered as one man in the street before the water-gate, and Ezra again appears among them. At their desire he produced the *Book of the Law*, and having opened it amid marks of the deepest reverence from all the people, he read it to an audience wrapped in attention from morning to midday. The manner of reading was this : Ezra stood on a pulpit, with six Scribes or Levites on his right hand and seven on his left, who seem to have relieved him in the reading ; for it is said, "they read in the book in the law of God *distinctly*." The people stood in their ranks in front of the pulpit ; and among them were thirteen other ministers, who, with the assistance of the Levites, "caused the people to understand the law." There can be little doubt that this phrase refers to a translation of what Ezra read in Hebrew into the mixed Chaldee dialect, which had become the vernacular tongue during the Captivity. The reading produced an impression like that made on Josiah. All the people wept at what they heard ; not only, we may well believe, with regret at the past glories of their nation, but at the recital of the sins for which that glory had departed, not unmixed with a penitent consciousness of their own guilt. But Nehemiah (who is now first mentioned in the transaction), supported by Ezra and the Levites, bade them cease their sorrow, and go home to "eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and

send portions to those for whom nothing was prepared, for the day was holy to Jehovah." The people went away to make great mirth, because they understood the words that were declared unto them. When the reading was resumed on the following day, they came to the institution of the Feast of Tabernacles in this very month of Tisri. Their excited minds caught the signal for fresh rejoicing in Jehovah. They went forth into the mount to fetch branches of olive, and pine, and myrtle, and palm, and thick trees, and made booths on the roofs and in the courts of their houses, in the Temple court and along the streets to the city gates. Such a Feast of Tabernacles had not been kept since the days of Joshua. The reading of the law was continued for all the seven days of the feast, and the eighth was a solemn assembly, as Moses had commanded.

After the burst of joy for God's mercy in restoring them, they turned to the solemn duty of humiliation and repentance for their sins. The Day of Atonement ought to have been kept on the tenth of this month. It had probably been passed over, as requiring more solemn preparation and a more orderly arrangement of the Temple service than was yet possible. In its place a fast was held two days after the Feast of Tabernacles, on the twenty-fourth day of Tisri. All who were of the seed of Israel, carefully separating themselves from the strangers, appeared in the deepest mourning, clad in sackcloth, and with earth upon their heads. The day seems to have been divided into four equal parts, only broken by the intervals necessary for refreshment. The first three hours were devoted to the reading of the law. The morning sacrifice fitly introduced the second quarter, which was spent in silent confession and prayer. When the hour of noon was past, the Levites, arranged on the steps of the Temple porch, or on a scaffold erected for the purpose, called upon the people to stand up and bless Jehovah. Then in a solemn prayer, the epitome of which is a fit model for all such services, they recited God's mercies from the first call of Abram ; they confessed the sins of their forefathers, and God's forbearance in punishing without utterly consuming them ; and they acknowledged His justice in their present state of humiliation and great distress, as servants to the kings set over them for their sins, to whom their land yielded its increase, and who had dominion over their bodies and cattle at their pleasure. Submissive to God's will, they ended by making a new covenant with Him ; and before the sun set, it was recorded

in writing, and sealed by the princes, priests, and Levites, whose names are recorded by Nehemiah, while the rest of the people bound themselves by a curse and an oath to walk in the law which God had given by Moses. The chief points of this covenant were: To make no intermarriages with the heathen; to abstain from traffic on the Sabbath, and to keep the sabbatic year, with its release of all debts; to pay a yearly tax of a third of a shekel for the services of the sanctuary, which are carefully enumerated; to offer the first-fruits and first-born, and the tithes due to the Levites and the priests; and, in one final word, "We will not forsake the house of our God." To most points of this covenant they remained faithful in the *letter*. The sins of the Jewish nation took henceforth a direction altogether different from the open rebellion and apostasy of their fathers. The more scrupulous their observance of the law, the more did they make it void by their traditions and pervert it to serve their selfishness. P. S.

**S: 1-12.** *General account of the reading of the Law.* The events of the first day of the seventh month were the reading of the Law and certain results that followed. We have, first, a general account (verses 1-3); second, details in regard to the reading (verses 4-8); third, the weeping that followed, and the way in which the weeping was dealt with (verses 9-12). Nehemiah understood the importance of keeping an enterprise in motion. As soon as the wall was completed, the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month (Neh. 6:15), before the enthusiasm over that achievement had time to cool, he pushed forward to accomplish yet greater things; utilizing for his first movement the great national day of the blowing of trumpets. W. J. B.

**I. They spake unto Ezra the scribe.** This is the first mention of Ezra in the present book, and the first proof we have had that he was contemporary with Nehemiah. B. C.—A gap of twelve or thirteen years occurs between the narrative with which the Book of Ezra ends, and the next appearance which Ezra makes upon the scene of history. It is uncertain how he was employed during this interval. "As Ezra's commission was only of a temporary nature," says Bishop Arthur Herve, "to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and to carry thither the silver and gold which the king and his counsellors had freely offered unto the God of Israel, and as there is no trace whatever of his presence at Jerusalem between the eighth and the twentieth

year of Artaxerxes, it seems probable that, after he had effected his reformation, and had appointed competent judges and magistrates, with authority to maintain it, he himself returned to the King of Persia. This is in itself what one would expect, and what is borne out by the parallel case of Nehemiah; and it also accounts for the abrupt termination of Ezra's narrative, and for that relapse of the Jews into their former irregularities which is apparent in the Book of Nehemiah. Such a relapse, and such a state of affairs at Jerusalem in general, could scarcely have occurred if Ezra had continued there." On these grounds it seems best to conclude that from B.C. 457 to B.C. 445 the great priest and scribe was absent from the holy city, either employed by the Persian monarch in other secular work, or pursuing his literary labors in retirement, at Babylon or elsewhere.

But a time came when, again, a call was made on him to return to Jerusalem—the cradle and citadel of his race—and resume an active superintendence over the community, which had been the object of his deep affection and diligent care twelve years before. But, this time, he was not to be in sole charge. Providence had provided him with a coadjutor in the person of Nehemiah—a man after his own heart—zealous, active, intensely pious, and profoundly anxious for the true well-being of his nation. The two were excellently fitted to assist and supplement each other. One possessed in a high degree the qualities needed in a political leader, was an active warrior, a sagacious statesman, well suited to grapple with practical dangers and difficulties of all kinds; the other was above all things a teacher, able to impress men's minds, to expound, convince, persuade, instruct, educate, guide in the way of true knowledge and pure religion.

Various reforms—which, while in some respects they restricted the liberties and increased the burdens of the Judean community, were yet of the highest advantage to it, by calling out its patriotism and waking up its religious zeal—must be assigned to the conjoint efforts of the two Hebrew leaders, who worked together in the most perfect harmony and agreement. The exact time which they occupied is uncertain; but it is on the whole most probable that they were begun and concluded within the space of a few months. The Book of Nehemiah is deficient in chronological notices; and, having been compiled from a number of distinct documents, lends itself to various interpretations. Nehemiah's governorship lasted

certainly for above twelve years (Neh. 5 : 14 ; 13 : 6) ; but during what portion of this time Ezra was associated with him cannot be determined. The later Israel, the Israel of the times of the Maccabees, and of our Lord's day, was the natural fruit and outcome of their exertions. Without them it is almost certain that the wall of partition between Israel and the heathen, which was absolutely indispensable under the circumstances, as even Kuenen admits, would have been broken down, and the small Jewish nation would have lost itself among its neighbors, and have vanished without leaving a trace behind. G. R.

#### **The Book of the Law of Moses.**

Evidently this book contained the laws which they were proposing to enforce ; and the prayer given in chap. 9, as having been offered after several days of public reading from the Book of the Law, is largely a recapitulation of the contents of the book. Applying these tests, it is evident that this book included our present Pentateuch (unless somebody can prove differences in details) ; but it is not so evident that Ezra's Book of the Law was limited to the Pentateuch. The recapitulation in chap. 9 passes without a break from the history recorded in the Pentateuch to that recorded in the following books ; and the law against intermarriage with foreigners, as enforced by Ezra and Nehemiah, is not found in the Pentateuch, save as the Pentateuch may be regarded as interpreted or supplemented by the other books. Directly, the Pentateuch only forbids intermarriage with Canaanites. W. J. B.

Princes, priests, Levites, and people receive Ezra's copy of the law as of unquestionable authority, and submit to it without opposition, though such submission, as we have seen, involved sacrifices the most distressing on the part of great numbers of the people, many of whom were of high rank and authority. Again : Ezra, Nehemiah, and the princes of the people went on harmoniously, as well as zealously, in the work of civil and ecclesiastical reform—a reform of great breadth and thoroughness, since it embraced the following specifications : the engagement of the people in a solemn covenant to walk in God's law, as given by Moses ; the renunciation and avoidance of all intermarriages with idolatrous nations ; the rigid sanctification of the Sabbath ; the observance of the sabbatical year and the non-exaction of debts therein ; the payment of a tax of a third of a shekel yearly for the service of the Temple ; the bringing of the first-fruits of the ground, of their sons, and of their cattle, to

the house of the Lord ; and the giving of tithes to the priests and Levites of all the proceeds of the land (Neh. 10 : 29-37). These details cover no inconsiderable part of the Pentateuch as we now have it ; and these details could not have been compiled at or subsequently to the time of the first return of the Jews out of their captivity. E. C. W.

4. Everything was prepared. Ezra had had a platform of wood constructed in the square, and had taken his station upon it at early dawn, together with thirteen other priests, six of them, with himself, occupying one side of the platform, and the remaining seven the other. He had brought "the Book of the Law" with him, and "opened it in the sight of all the people" (verse 5), while the people "stood up" in the attitude of attention and respect. Prefacing his reading with an ascription of praise to Almighty God, whereto all the people responded by a shout of "Amen, amen" (verse 6), he proceeded to read out such portions of the law to the assembled multitude as he judged best, and continued his occupation from early morning to midday (verse 3). Distributed among the people were thirteen Levites, whose task it was to repeat, and, where necessary, to explain the words read by Ezra. G. R.

Those colonists did not leave comfortable homes in Babylon to set up a temple at Jerusalem whose ritual had, in their estimation, anything short of a Divine sanction. Ezra brings forth the book, and the people receive it, as the law of Moses, the ancient constitution of the nation which they had sacrificed so much to restore ; and the modern theory gives no adequate explanation of this deeply rooted national belief. Ezra is a restorer, not an innovator. And although the high regard to Scripture which he inaugurated degenerated into a slavish worship of the letter, and the attention to the legal element ran into extravagance, it is the great merit of him and his associates that, at a critical time, they preserved the ancient writings which show how from earliest times the people of Israel had been the channel of the revelation of God's will to mankind, and rallied around these writings the wondrous people that has been from age to age the witness of God's truth to the world. *James Robertson.*

9-18. Through the study of God's word there came to these people a revelation of themselves that made them ashamed and sorrowful. But through the same study there came to them a revelation of God that made them glad and

exultant. Through twenty-three days of glad-some public services Nehemiah fostered in them this strength that comes from studying Jehovah's law, and rejoicing in Him. In token of this joy, they went out by public proclamation into the mountain country, and brought in green branches, and covered the roofs and streets and open squares of Jerusalem with the booths in which dwelt the people who were keeping festival. W. J. B.

It strikes one as touching and strange that such an assembly should be needed after so many centuries of national existence. It sums up in one vivid picture the sin and suffering of the nation. To observe that law had been the condition of their prosperity. To bind it on their hearts should have been their delight and would have been their life; and here, after all these generations, the best of the nation are assembled, so ignorant of it that they cannot even understand it when they hear it. Absorption with worldly things has an awful power of dulling spiritual apprehension. Neglect of God's law weakens the power of understanding it. This scene was in the truest sense a "revival." We may learn the true way of bringing men back to God—viz., the faithful exposition and enforcement of God's will and word. We may learn, too, what should be the aim of public teachers of religion—viz., first and foremost, the clear setting forth of God's truth. Their first business is to "give the sense, so that they understand the reading;" and that, not for merely intellectual purposes, but that, like the crowd outside the water gate on that hot noonday, men may be moved to penitence, and then lifted to the joy of the Lord.

10. The first day of the seventh month was the feast of trumpets; and when the reading was over, and its effects of tears and sorrow for disobedience were seen, the preachers changed their tone, to bring consolation and exhort to gladness. Nehemiah had taken no part in reading the Law, as Ezra the priest and his Levites were more appropriately set to that. But he joins them in exhorting the people to dry their tears and go joyfully to the feast. These exhortations contain many thoughts universally applicable. They teach that even those who are most conscious of sin and breaches of God's law should weep indeed, but should swiftly pass from tears to joy. They do not teach how that passage is to be effected; and in so far they are imperfect, and need to be supplemented by the New Testament teaching of forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But in their clear discernment that sorrow is not

meant to be a permanent characteristic of religion, and that gladness is a more acceptable offering than tears, they teach a valuable lesson, needed always by men who fancy that they must atone for their sins by their own sadness, and that religion is gloomy, harsh, and crabbed.

Further, these exhortations to festal gladness breathe the characteristic Old Testament tone of wholesome enjoyment of material good as a part of religion. The way of looking at eating and drinking and the like as capable of being made acts of worship has been too often forgotten by two kinds of men—saints who have sought sanctity in asceticism; and sensualists who have taken deep draughts of such pleasures without calling on the name of the Lord, and so have failed to find His gifts a cup of salvation. It is possible to "eat and drink and see God," as the elders of Israel did on Sinai.

Further, the plain duty of remembering the needy while we enjoy God's gifts is beautifully enjoined here. The principle underlying the commandment to send portions to them for whom nothing is provided—that is, no feast has been dressed—is that all gifts are held in trust, that nothing is bestowed on us for our own good only, but that we are in all things stewards. The law extends to the smallest and to the greatest possessions. We have no right to feast on anything unless we share it, whether it be festal dainties or the bread that came down from heaven. To share our portion with others is the way to make our portion greater as well as sweeter.

Further, "the joy of the Lord is your strength." By strength here seems to be meant a stronghold. If we fix our desires on God, and have trained our hearts to find sweeter delights in communion with Him than in any earthly good, our religion will have lifted us above mists and clouds into clear air above, where sorrows and changes will have little power to affect us. If we are to rejoice in the Lord, it will be possible for us to "rejoice always." And that joy will be as a refuge from all the ills that flesh is heir to. Dwelling in God, we shall dwell safely, and be far from the fear of evil. A. M.

The crowning revelation of Old Testament times is given to that reformer who, coming up from the land of exile to re-create and renew the people of the Lord, cheers and inspires them with the assurance that God overflows with delight in His chosen, works out their salvation in a festal mood, and commissions them to minister to each other's necessities with ungrudging bounty and a deathless hope; for,



says he, "the joy of the Lord is your strength." God's joy a stronghold! Assuredly and unspeakably. When once there is breathed into us, so as to fill and uplift us above the low zones of our world-life, this sense of the eternal Father delighting in the sons of men and in the mercy He gives them, forthwith the world of nature is a new creation, instinct with a new significance, and potent with an evangelical energy. Nor is this less true of the bitter and painful experiences that make so large and obtrusive a portion of our earthly life; for they, too, are a part of the Divine order and plan of a loving and rejoicing Father, who finds His own joy diminished by our needless pain, and is seeking by all means to make us partakers of His holiness, so that we may be sharers of His happiness. The joy of the Lord is a stronghold into which we may run and be safe from the fear of death. The joy of the Lord is the source of our active, self-forgetting generosity. Whatever God is for us and to us, it is that we may be the same for and to others. The exhaustless fountain of the Divine gladness fills our cisterns till they overflow for the refreshing of a thirsty world. Joy in the Lord is strength, positive, actual power, for ministry. *J. Clifford.*

Nature and grace alike testify that there is strength in joy. A sorrowful man is a dispirited man. Melancholy breeds despair. Tears in the eyes blind the sight. Even when sanctified affliction imparts new power to the soul, as unquestionably it does, so that there is a victory through sorrow, it is by an exercise of faith which supplants the natural grief by a joy and peace in God—a truth recognized by the words of Scripture concerning "chastening," that "afterward it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteousness." *W. W. Patton.*

No vehement resolutions, no sense of your own sinfulness, nor even contrite remembrance of past failures, ever made a man strong yet. It made him weak that he might become strong, and when it had done that it had done its work. For strength there must be hope, for strength there must be joy. If the arm is to smite with vigor, it must smite at the bidding of a calm and light heart. The Christian work is of such a sort as that the most dangerous opponent to it is simple despondency and simple sorrow. "The joy of the Lord is strength." You are weak unless you are glad; you are not glad and strong unless your faith and hope are fixed in Christ, and unless you are working from and not toward the assurance of salvation, from and not toward the sense of pardon, from and not

toward the conviction of acceptance with God! *A. M.*—Those who serve God slavishly from no other motive loftier than fear know nothing of spiritual joy. The service of love is full of freedom, full of gladness, full of power. It finds sweetness in self-sacrifice, delights in giving, makes duty a constant delight, ennobles the most menial tasks by performing them royally. It makes the joy of the Lord our strength. *Anon.*

Our religion is not quite religion until it is clothed in a shining robe of gladness. It is only potent in degree as it becomes itself a gladness in us. All through the books of Moses we hear the perpetual overtone of an eleventh commandment, Thou shalt not clothe religion in the garments of heaviness. "And ye shall"—not the mere promise, the command—"rejoice before the Lord your God." "And thou shalt be altogether joyful." In other words, we are not merely to give ourselves good ground for joy, and let joy spring as it will, but we are to sow joy in that ground, and cultivate and harvest it. We are to strive to make, and feel, and show, every part and aspect of our religion delightful. What gives religion this vast advantage? First, it is the joy of contrition. Every child that has ever repented, and confessed a fault to a loving parent, knows what that is. Next, it is the joy of reconciliation to God, and harmony with His purposes and plans. Then, it is the joy of loving and being loved by God. And again, it is the joy of seeing and feeling everything, whether it seemeth for the present joyous or grievous work, and making it work in us the perfecting of that image of God, that Christ-likeness, which true religion makes our supreme desire. And, lastly, it is the joy of God's personal presence with us, and personal and entire care over us; or, rather, this is the last—the taking of all our joys to God, and God into all our joys. *Cable.*

When we speak of joy, we do not speak of something we are after, but of something that will come to us, when we are after God and duty. It is a prize unbought, and is freest, purest in its flow, when it comes unsought. No getting into heaven, as a place, will compass it. You must carry it with you, else it is not there. You must have it in you, as the music of a well-ordered soul, the fire of a holy purpose, the welling up, out of the central depths, of eternal springs that hide their waters there. It is the rest of confidence, the blessedness of internal light and outflowing benevolence—the highest form of life and spiritual majesty. Being the birth of character, it has eter-

nity in it. Rising from within, it is sovereign over all circumstance and hindrance. It is *the joy of the Lord* in the soul of man, because it is joy like His, and because it is from Him, participated by the secret life of goodness. *Bushnell.*

Joy in the Lord is the natural result of Christian faith. It takes away the sense of sin. It gives us, instead of the torpid conscience or the angrily-stinging conscience—it gives us a conscience all calm from its accusations, with all the sting drawn out of it; for quiet peace lies in the heart of the man that is trusting in the Lord. The Gospel works joy, because the soul is at rest in God; joy, because every function of the spiritual nature has found now its haven and its object; joy, because health has come, and the healthy working of the body or of the spirit is itself a gladness; joy, because the dim future is painted (where it is painted at all) with shapes of light and beauty, and because the very vagueness of these is an element in the greatness of its revelation. The joy that is in Christ is deep and abiding. Faith in Him naturally works gladness. A. M.

**9: 1-38.** The feast was over—the “solemn assembly” of the eighth day had been held—and the Judean community, assembled from the farthest points of the territory, from Hebron and Beersheba, from Ziklag, Jarmuth and Lachish, from Bethel, from Jericho and Tekoa, expected probably to be dismissed to their homes, when a further religious duty was laid upon them. The desire to weep and mourn and afflict themselves, which Nehemiah and Ezra had checked when it showed itself inopportunely on the first day of Tisri (8: 2-9), was now to be gratified. The feast having been celebrated and one day of rest allowed them, the twenty-fourth of Tisri was appointed to be a day of humiliation and abstinence, on which another solemn assembly should be held, a confession of sin made, and a formal renewal of their covenant with God entered into by the whole people. The real heart of the people had been touched; and on the twenty and fourth day of the seventh month “the children of Israel assembled with fasting, and with sackcloth and earth upon them” (verse 1). They had carefully “separated themselves from all strangers” (verse 2), and having gathered themselves together in the Temple court, “they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.” Passages from the law were read to them by the Levites during a fourth part of the day (verse 3); then during another fourth part the people knelt and confessed their sins to God and worshipped Him; after

this they rose up from their knees, and, standing each in his place, blessed and praised the Lord (verse 5), according to a set form of words, which Ezra probably composed, and which has been preserved to us in the Book of Nehemiah (verses 5-38). God’s many mercies were recounted, and the people’s many backslidings; His justice was acknowledged, and His mercy appealed to; it was solemnly represented to Him that His people were “in great distress” (verse 37); and then the covenant was renewed—not, as on former occasions, merely by word of mouth, but in a documentary form (verse 38)—a formal deed being drawn out, to which the princes, Levites, and priests appended their seals, and which was no doubt laid up in the national archives. G. R.

**6. Thou hast made.** The history of the creation in Genesis is not merely a cosmogonic account of primitive date, but above all else it is an express counter-statement opposed to the conceptions of Egypt and of Babylon. The latter were formed in regions either naturally fertile or early animated by commercial intercourse; the Mosaic idea emerges upon the lonely heights of Sinai, which no terrestrial vicissitudes have ever touched, and where nothing interposes between God and the world. With the Egyptians and Babylonians everything is developed from the innate powers of the sun, the stars, and the earth itself. Jehovah, on the other hand, appears as the Creator of heaven and earth, as both the originator and the orderer of the world. With the Egyptians man is not distinguished in kind from the sun, from which he issues, rather as a product than as a creature, and the same is true of the Babylonian cosmogony, where the Divine element in man is only revealed through the blood of a God chancing to fall down to earth. All creatures are generically the same with man. In the Mosaic cosmogony, on the other hand, the elements, plants, and animals are called into being by a supreme, intelligent Will, which creates in the last place man after His own image. The divergence is immeasurable. In a passage which criticism asserts to belong to the oldest form of the original account, to man is assigned lordship over the fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, and all beasts which move upon the earth. This is a conception distinct from that prevalent in Egypt, where the bull is worshipped with divine honors as symboling the creative powers of nature. The idea of Jehovah, far from having arisen from nature-worship, is set up in opposition to it. *Ranke.*

**Heaven, the earth, and all things.**

It astonishes all thought to observe the minuteness of God's government, and of the natural and common processes which He carries on from day to day. His dominions are spread out, system beyond system, system above system, filling all height and latitude, but He is never lost in the vast or magnificent. He descends to an infinite detail, and builds a little universe in the smallest things. He carries on a process of growth in every tree, and flower, and living thing; accomplishes in each an internal organization and works the functions of an internal laboratory, too delicate all for eye or instrument to trace. He articulates the members and impels the instincts of every living mote that shines in the sunbeam. As when we ascend toward the distant and the vast, so when we descend toward the minute, we see His attention acuminated, and His skill concentrated on His object; and the last discernible particle dies out of our sight with the same divine glory on it as on the last orb that glimmers in the skirt of the universe. *Bushnell.*

Regard Nature as transparent, as a window to look through and see the living powers of infinite love and wisdom in manifestation and operation; then she both gladdens your affections and charms and invigorates your mind. On the other hand, regard Nature as her own cause—then she becomes opaque; and the mind of the inquirer is confounded, darkened, and brought to a dead stand. In this case man finds himself shut up within limits which are too little for his nature, and which yield no explanation or solution of his existence; in the other case he passes on through an open door to the Infinite Presence, and sees before him his own endless way. The distinction is between being in a prison, within which your grave is waiting for you, and being in a preparatory school of discipline and culture, to be qualified in due time for society, service, honor, and bliss in the home kingdom of larger space and clearer light. *Pulsford.*

For the susceptibility to natural beauty and grandeur God has provided. Nature is full of objects that correspond to this; it is among our purest and best sources of enjoyment, and is the forerunner and type of the higher enjoyment from the beauty of holiness. But the moral susceptibilities can be awakened only by character. For these the great provision is in God Himself, whose character is perfect; but aside from this, these susceptibilities may be drawn out in high activity by human character. If all people were to reflect the image of Christ in their radical character, the ideals of

literature and art, or rather something more beautiful and better, would live and act before us, and no one can estimate the enhanced joy from moral beauty. *Mark Hopkins.*

The *host of heaven* in the Old Testament includes, as this passage of Nehemiah shows, the *heavenly bodies* and the *celestial spirits*. The Old Testament distinctly maintains not only the *creaturehood* of the heavenly host (Ps. 33 : 6), but also the distinction of the two above-named classes. It is only by a *poetical personification* that the stars are spoken of in the song of Deborah (Judg. 5 : 20) as the warriors of the Lord, who, *leaving their courses*, descend to fight for Israel against Sisera, and that the morning stars are said in Job 38 : 7 to have joined with the angels in celebrating the morning of creation. The greater the danger to the Israelites, surrounded as they were by Sabæanism, of being seduced into a worship of the heavenly bodies, the more important was it not only to declare Jehovah's superiority to the heavenly bodies, and to forbid their adoration (De. 4 : 19 ; 17 : 3), but also to maintain such a view concerning them as might of itself exclude all worship of them. This is done from Gen. 1 : 14 onward. The heavenly bodies are declared to be merely *light-bearers*, created by God, and as such subserving earthly purposes. They manifest, indeed, by their splendor and their course, the greatness and wisdom of the Creator (Ps. 8 : 4 ; 19 : 5 ; Amos 5 : 8 ; Job 9 : 9 ; 38 : 31 sq.), but their brilliancy admits of no comparison with the Divine glory. Thus they are the hosts of God, whom His almighty will commands (Isa. 40 : 26 ; 45 : 12); they serve to proclaim and to glorify His judgments (Joel 3 : 15 ; Isa. 13 : 10 ; Hab. 3 : 11). O.

**7-31.** Compare with this long historical *résumé* the still longer ones in Ps. 78 : 5-72 and Acts 7 : 2-47. God's dealings with His people furnished a moral lesson of extraordinary force, and moral teachers naturally made frequent reference to them. But it is not often that we have so complete and elaborate a recapitulation as the present, which, beginning with the call of Abraham, brings the history down to the time of the Persian servitude. God's goodness and His people's ingratitude form the burden of the whole. P. C.

**20.** "Thou gavest Thy good Spirit to instruct them" refers to the occurrence (Num. 11 : 17, 25) where God endowed the seventy elders with the spirit of prophecy for the confirmation of Moses' authority. *Keil.*—"Thou gavest Thy good Spirit to instruct them." To such it was said, "Turn ye at My reproof : I

will pour out My spirit to you, I will make known My words unto you" (Prov. 1 : 23, 24). We see whence their destruction came, not from God's first restraint of His Spirit, but their refusing, despising, and setting at naught His counsels and reproofs. And when it is said, "They rebelled and vexed His Spirit; and He therefore turned and fought against them, and became their enemy," it appears that before His Spirit was not withheld, but did variously and often make essays and attempts upon them. And when Stephen, immediately before his martyrdom, thus bespeaks the descendants of these Jews, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye," it is implied, the Holy Ghost had been always striving from age to age with that stubborn people. *Howe.*

**30. Many years didst Thou forbear them.** The Ten Tribes for two hundred and sixty years from the revolt of Jeroboam, the remaining two tribes for one hundred and thirty-five years longer. **Testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit in Thy prophets.** Compare 2 K. 17 : 13, where the phrase used is nearly the same, and see also 2 Chron. 36 : 15, 16. There was a continual succession of prophets from the time of Solomon to and through the Captivity. Besides those whose writings have come down to us, we find mention of Ahijah the Shilonite, Iddo the seer, Shemaiah the prophet, Hanani, Jehu, the son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, Huldah, and (perhaps) Hosai. The guilt of the Jewish people was enormously increased by the fact that they would not give ear to the exhortations constantly addressed to them by the messengers of God. Therefore they were delivered into the hands of the heathen, or people of the lands. P. C.

From this prayer we see that the *history* of the Pentateuch was at that time familiar to the people. There is remarkable evidence in the prayer of even a verbal acquaintance with it. The mention of the fact that the foot of the Israelites did not swell in the wanderings, and the word expressing it, are both peculiar to this prayer and to De. 8 : 4. It is highly improbable, not to say morally impossible, that there is no allusion here to the passage in Deuteronomy. But, in that case, it is certain that, in the time of Nehemiah, Deuteronomy was accepted as an authoritative record of the wanderings in the wilderness. There is evidence also that the authors of the prayer recognized in the troubles that had befallen their nation a

fulfilment of the threatenings which had been pronounced against them in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy (compare, *e.g.*, Neh. 9 : 35-37 with De. 38 : 33, 47, 48, 51); and consequently they must have regarded that book as containing, not only true history, but also a veritable declaration on the part of God, which familiar and painful events have ratified; and it matters very little whether this portion of Nehemiah was written by him or by Ezra, or by any one else. The only matter of importance is that it should be credible as history, and there is not a shadow of suspicion attaching to it on this ground. We may rightly claim it, therefore, as documentary evidence of about the middle of the fifth century before Christ to the way in which the history of the Pentateuch was then regarded, and especially the Book of Deuteronomy. It is absolutely impossible that the Book of Deuteronomy could have been a forgery of the last two hundred years and the chiefs and leaders of the nation not have known it. If, as a matter of fact, it was not entitled to the position it held, it would not have been quoted as history, nor regarded as a Divine oracle that had been fulfilled. At all events, at this time the Book of Deuteronomy had obtained its position as an integral portion of the Pentateuch. The history embodied in the Pentateuch was familiar to the bulk of the people, and that Pentateuch itself was accepted as of Divine authority, and as substantially the work of Moses. And, with respect to this belief, it must be borne in mind that it was national, and of great antiquity. Their national unity and their national existence centred in their peculiar estimate of the law of Moses. And the belief, from its very nature, was one that could not but have been of great antiquity. In all the past there was no name at all to be compared with that of Moses. There was no character that occupied anything like the same position or had the same hold upon the national mind. The consciousness of this fact is so clear at every period of the history and on every page of the literature that you must sweep away the whole of the existing literature before you can successfully establish any opposite theory. *Leathes.*

**Chap. 10.** *The names of those who sealed, and the terms of the covenant.* The covenant which the Levites had recommended was at once accepted by the heads of the nation in Church and State, and was "sealed to" by Nehemiah, by his secretary, by the heads of the priestly and Levitical families, each sealing for his house, by the heads of various lay families or

communities, and by a certain number of individual laymen. The rest of the people "clave to their brethren"—*i.e.*, accepted the obligations of the covenant as fully as if they had put their seals to it. The people bound themselves, first of all, in general terms, to keep the whole law, "to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord their Lord, and His judgments and His statutes" (verse 29); after which they went on to particularize certain special points of the law, recently infringed upon, which they bound themselves to observe in future. These were chiefly the following: 1. The prohibition of intermarriage with the neighboring idolatrous nations (verse 30). 2. The command to hallow the Sabbath. 3. The law concerning the sabbatical year (verse 31). 4. The law of first-fruits (verses 35-37). 5. The obligation to pay tithes to the sacerdotal order (verses 37, 38). Finally, they undertook certain new obligations, not expressly contained in the law, but perhaps regarded as flowing from it by way of natural consequence, or else as desirable modes of carrying out its provisions. These were three in number—*viz.*: 1. The entire abolition of the custom which had grown up of lending money to their brethren upon *pledge* (see chap. 5: 3-13). 2. The support of the Temple service by an annual tax upon each adult male, which was fixed for the present at the rate of one third part of a shekel (verse 32). 3. The supply of the wood requisite for keeping the fire alight upon the great altar, and for consuming the various offerings (verse 34). It is remarkable that these two latter regulations became permanent national institutions, maintaining themselves into Roman times, when we find them still continuing. (See Matt. 17: 24.) P. C.

That this was practically a new thing, that the people hereby revived and made obligatory among themselves a host of observances from which they had been free as long back as they could remember, may be readily allowed; but the statement that "these ordinances were now made known and imposed upon the Jewish nation for the first time" (Kuenen) must be strenuously denied, rejected and contradicted. The double fiction of a forgery of Deuteronomy, which imposed on Hilkiah the high-priest in the

days of Josiah, and of a further forgery at this time by Ezra and his Babylonian friends of a book of priestly ordinances, corresponding to Leviticus, Numbers, and part of Exodus, which imposed on the nation at large, will scarcely find acceptance with any honest and reverent reader of Scripture, who cannot fail to perceive that it contradicts the entire series of the historical sacred writings from Exodus to Chronicles, as well as many passages in the prophets, and in the New Testament. Ezra and Nehemiah are to be regarded, not as coming from Babylonia with ordinances drawn up there, and hitherto existing only in theory, which they proceeded for the first time to carry from theory into practice, but as recalling to the memory of the people the old laws under which the nation had lived from the Exodus to the Captivity, and re-introducing, re-promulgating, and re-imposing them. Otherwise, we must regard the two great reformers as impostors, cheating the nation into the belief that an entirely new legislation, considered by Ezra and his priestly friends to be advisable under the peculiar circumstances of the time, was in reality one communicated by God Himself to Moses.

Nehemiah's first reformation was now complete. With Ezra's assistance he had made the whole law of Moses, great parts of which had long been laid aside and even forgotten, known to the people. He had bound them to its observance. He had roused up in them a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice, whereby they had been induced to accept fresh burdens and fresh obligations without a murmur. At the same time, he had provided for the sustenance and support of the ministers of religion—the priests and Levites. He had relieved them from troublesome secular duties—the cutting and storing of the Temple fuel—the collection and conveyance of the tithes and first-fruits—and he had enabled them to devote themselves more exclusively than before to the offices of religion. He had further secured the continuance of the Temple service by a tax, which could press heavily on no man, but which would yet suffice for its purpose, and prevent the ministers of religion from having their scanty resources unduly strained in times of depression and poverty. G. R.

## Section 64.

NAMES OF COLONISTS. NEHEMIAH'S RETURN. DEDICATION OF WALL. REFORM OF ABUSES : TEMPLE DESECRATION, SABBATH-BREAKING, AND MIXED MARRIAGES.

NEHEMIAH, CHAPS. 11, 12, 13.

**11 : 1** AND the princes of the people dwelt in Jerusalem : the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts in the *other* cities.  
**2** And the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem.

*Verses 3-36 include lists of chief dwellers in Jerusalem and in the country towns and villages. Chap. 12 : 1-26 contains lists of priestly and Levitical houses. These lists are sufficiently described in the first general note.*

**12 : 27** And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with  
**28** thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. And the sons of the singers gathered themselves together, both out of the plain round about Jerusalem, and  
**29** from the villages of the Netophathites ; also from Beth-gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba  
**30** and Azmaveth : for the singers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem. And the priests and the Levites purified themselves ; and they purified the people, and the gates, and  
**31** the wall. Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great companies that gave thanks and went in procession ; *whereof one went* on the right hand upon  
**32** the wall toward the dung gate : and after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of  
**33, 34** Judah, and Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam, Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and  
**35** Jeremiah, and certain of the priests' sons with trumpets : Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of  
**36** Asaph ; and his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethanel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments of David the man of God ; and Ezra the scribe was  
**37** before them : and by the fountain gate, and straight before them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the  
**38** water gate eastward. And the other company of them that gave thanks went to meet them, and I after them, with the half of the people, upon the wall, above the tower of the furnaces,  
**39** even unto the broad wall ; and above the gate of Ephraim, and by the old gate, and by the fish gate, and the tower of Hananel, and the tower of Hammeah, even unto the sheep gate :  
**40** and they stood still in the gate of the guard. So stood the two companies of them that gave  
**41** thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me : and the priests, Elia-  
**42** kim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets ; and Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and  
**43** Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah their overseer. And they offered great sacrifices that day, and rejoiced ; for God had made them rejoice with great joy ; and the women also and the children rejoiced : so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.  
**44** And on that day were men appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the heave offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, and for the tithes, according to the fields of the cities, the portions appointed by the law for the priests and Levites : for Judah rejoiced  
**45** for the priests and for the Levites that waited. And they kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, and *so did* the singers and the porters, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old  
**46** there was a chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God. And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, as every day required : and they sanctified for the Levites ; and the Levites sanctified for the sons of Aaron.

**13 : 1** On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people ; and therein was found written, that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the assembly of God for ever ; because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, to curse them : howbeit our God turned the curse into a  
**2** blessing. And it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

- 4 Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of  
 5 our God, being allied unto Tobiah, had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they  
 laid the meal offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the wine,  
 and the oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, and the singers, and the  
 6 porters; and the heave offerings for the priests. But in all this *time* I was not at Jerusa-  
 lem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went unto the king,  
 7 and after certain days asked I leave of the king: and I came to Jerusalem, and understood of  
 the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the  
 8 house of God. And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of  
 9 Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and  
 thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meal offerings and the  
 10 frankincense. And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them; so  
 11 that the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then  
 contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered  
 12 them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn  
 13 and the wine and the oil unto the treasuries. And I made treasurers over the treasuries,  
 Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and the next to them  
 14 their business was to distribute unto their brethren. Remember me, O my God, concerning  
 this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the  
 observances thereof.
- 15 In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in  
 sheaves, and lading asses *therewith*; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens,  
 which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified *against them* in the  
 16 day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought in  
 fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jeru-  
 17 salem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is  
 18 this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our  
 God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by  
 19 profaning the sabbath. And it came to pass that, when the gates of Jerusalem began to be  
 dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut, and commanded that they  
 should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I over the gates,  
 20 that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. So the merchants and sellers  
 21 of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them,  
 and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on  
 22 you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. And I commanded the  
 Levites that they should purify themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates,  
 to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember unto me, O my God, this also, and spare me accord-  
 ing to the greatness of thy mercy.
- 23 In those days also saw I the Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of  
 24 Moab: and their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the  
 25 Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them,  
 and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear  
 by God, *saying*, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters  
 26 for your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet  
 among many nations was there no king like him, and he was beloved of his God, and God  
 27 made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did strange women cause to sin. Shall  
 we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to trespass against our God in marrying  
 28 strange women? And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was son  
 29 in law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me. Remember them, O my  
 God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the  
 30 Levites. Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed wards for the priests and  
 31 for the Levites, every one in his work; and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and  
 for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

*The Closing Sections of the Book of Nehemiah.*

Nehemiah's narrative in the first person, broken off at Neh. 7:5 for the insertion of the list of the returned exiles, resumed, perhaps, in 11:1, 2, and again interrupted by the genealogical note (11:3 to 12:26), is finally resumed with the account of the dedication of the wall (12:27). This closing part of it consists of three sections, each ending with the precative clause, "Remember me, O my God," etc. (13:14, 22, 31). The first section describes the dedication of the wall, the renewed separation from foreigners, the renewed provision for the Levites,

and, parenthetically, the reaction which had taken place during Nehemiah's absence, and which rendered these renewed arrangements necessary. It follows that the events of this section occurred partly during the interval between the two administrations of Nehemiah, and partly soon after his return for his second administration. The second section describes a struggle for legalized Sabbath-keeping that occurred at some unknown later date. The third section is mainly concerned with two incidents in a renewed struggle against the practice of intermarriage with foreigners, but closes with

a more general statement as to the work of Nehemiah. These statements touching foreign marriages perhaps cover a considerable interval of time. At all events, the latest incident mentioned, the marriage of a descendant of Joiada the high-priest with a woman of the family of Sanballat (Neh. 13 : 28), probably occurred some decades after the beginning of the second administration of Nehemiah. The opening chapters of Nehemiah's narrative are relatively full, covering in all only a few months. The closing sections are relatively brief, belonging to three different points of time, and covering, in all, many years. The dedication of the wall belongs to Nehemiah's second administration. The matters in the section (11 : 3 to 12 : 26) do not lead up to the account of the dedication. That section is in part a duplicate of 1 Chron. 9. It is a series of genealogical notes, including the names of men of at least six generations. Most of the men of the two youngest of these generations were not yet born when the wall was dedicated, and the names of those who participated in the dedication are in no way made prominent in these notes. There is a clear break between this genealogical section and what follows it. And, on the other hand, the account of the pageant at the wall is closely connected with the events related directly afterward. It was "on that day" that they made the arrangements described in 12 : 44. It was still "on that day" (13 : 1) that they read in the law in regard to the exclusion of Moabites and Ammonites from the assembly of Jehovah. It is necessarily to these events that the phrase "before this" of 13 : 4 applies. Hence the affirmation there made is that Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem took place before these events ; that is, before the dedication of the wall and the reading of the law which accompanied it. And this is equivalent to saying that the dedication occurred after Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem for his second administration. Just at that time there were reasons why Nehemiah should devise such a public occasion as this. He could make use of it as a means of influencing the people for resisting the reactionary movement that had set in during his absence. This is a sufficient reply to the argument sometimes used, that it is not likely that they would so long have postponed the dedication of the wall. A city wall is not a temple, and does not necessarily demand dedication. There is no reason to think they would have dedicated it at all, save as there might be value in the dedicatory solemnities themselves.

*Nehemiah's Two Administrations.* According

to the record in the first ten chapters, Nehemiah accomplished two great things in the first seven months of the twentieth year of Artaxerxes. The first was the rebuilding of the wall, and the second the establishment of internal affairs on a sound basis. The points of internal administration that are most emphasized are, first, the abolishing of marriages with foreigners (Neh. 10 : 30) ; second, the stopping of trade on the Sabbath and the holy days (Neh. 10 : 31) ; third, the securing the observance of "the seventh year" (both by letting the soil rest and by releasing debts, doubtless, Ex. 23 : 10, 11 ; Lev. 25 : 3-7 ; De. 15 : 1, 2 ; Neh. 10 : 31) ; fourth, the breaking up of extortionate practices (Neh. 10 : 31 ; chap. 5) ; fifth, the making of business-like provision for the support of the Temple services and ministers (Neh. 10 : 32-39). From the close of these seven months, the first administration of Nehemiah lasted eleven or twelve years (Neh. 13 : 6 ; 5 : 14). The time was doubtless employed in working out the problems just mentioned, and the auxiliary problem of securing to Jerusalem a sufficient population to make it a safe city, and suitable for the national Temple and worship (Neh. 7 : 4 ; 11 : 1, 2). In Neh. 5 : 14-19, we are informed that during all this time Nehemiah lived in a generous and hospitable way in Jerusalem, but without cost to the people over whom he was governor. Doubtless those were to him trying years, but, on the whole, years of success. Steadily his people became more prosperous, and the ideas represented by Ezra and himself more influential among them. At the end of the twelve years Nehemiah went to the king, perhaps thinking that his task in Jerusalem was now accomplished. Thus his first administration closed, B.C. 433.

It turned out, however, that he could not be spared, and he was recalled for a second administration (Neh. 13 : 6). How long he had been gone is a matter of conjecture. Some guess that it was one year, and some that it was several years ; but it cannot have been many years. On his return to Jerusalem, he found disintegration in rapid progress. Tobiah had a lodging in the Temple itself. The Jews were again mingling with foreigners. The Sabbath was profaned. The provision for supporting the Temple attendants was neglected, and they had scattered, each to earn his own living. Nehemiah acted promptly and vigorously. He summarily evicted Tobiah. He commenced gathering again the scattered Levites and singers, and insisted that adequate provision should be made for them. The so-



lemnities of the dedication of the wall afforded him an occasion for assembling and thoroughly reorganizing them, and providing for their support, and an equally good occasion for securing the ratification of his policy of excluding foreigners. Perhaps he would have lost a large part of a year's tithes, if he had waited till the feast of booths for a national gathering that should act in these matters. The administration thus vigorously begun was doubtless a long one—how long no one knows. W. J. B.

**Chaps. 11, 12.** The *nexus* of chap. 11 is with chap. 7:4, 5. Having spoken in that place of the insufficiency of the population of Jerusalem, Nehemiah now proceeds to explain the steps which he took to remedy it. He made, it would seem, a census of the entire nation, and required each town and district to transfer one tenth of its population to the capital. The men in the various localities determined among themselves by lot who should stay and who should go, and Nehemiah no doubt made the necessary arrangements for the reception of the newcomers at Jerusalem. Forced enlargements of capitals by transfers of this kind were not uncommon in the ancient world, where the strength of states was considered to depend very greatly upon the size and predominance of the capital. Thucydides attributes the greatness and prosperity of the Athenian community to an artificial enlargement of the population of Athens which he ascribes to Theseus. Other notorious instances are those of Syracuse, Megalopolis and Tigranocerta. In Jerusalem at this time the special need of an increase in the number of the inhabitants was probably the defence of the walls. These had been rebuilt on the ancient foundations—their circuit was not much less than four miles—and to man them in case of attack, a large population was necessary. From a comparison of the numbers given in this chapter (verses 6-19) with those of 1 Chron. 9:9-22, it may be gathered that the result of Nehemiah's arrangements was to give Jerusalem a population of about twenty thousand souls.

Having been led, in speaking of this matter, to give a sort of catalogue of the chief dwellers at Jerusalem (verses 4-19), and another of the country towns and villages occupied at this time by those Israelites who had returned from the Captivity (verses 25-35), Nehemiah is induced to insert, at this point, certain other lists or catalogues which he regards as worthy of being put on record. These lists are four in number, and occupy chap. 12 as far as verse 26.

They comprise: (1) a list of the priestly and Levitical houses which returned with Zerubbabel (verses 1-9); (2) a list of the high-priests from Jeshua to Jaddua; (3) a list of the heads of the priestly courses in the time of the high-priest, Joiakim; and (4) a list of the chief Levitical houses at the same period and afterward. Such lists possess at the present day but a very slight and secondary interest. Their formation, however, and safe preservation were, at the time, essential for the continuity of the nation's history, and the maintenance of the priestly order in purity, and without admixture of laic elements. P. C.

**11:2.** *The men that willingly offered themselves.* Besides those on whom the lot fell, a certain number volunteered to change their residence and to transfer themselves and families from their country homes to Jerusalem. The people called down blessings upon them for their patriotism. P. C.

**Chap. 12.** This chapter is made up of two portions. From verse 1 to verse 26 it mainly consists of lists of the leading priests and Levites at different periods. Verses 27-47 give an account of the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem. This last passage is certainly from the pen of Nehemiah, and was written probably about B.C. 483. The lists which constitute the earlier portion of the chapter are four: (1) A list of the chief priestly and Levitical families, which returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Jeshua (verses 1-9); (2) the succession of the high-priests from Jeshua to Jaddua, high-priest in the time of Alexander the Great (verses 10, 11); (3) a list of the actual heads of the priestly families in the time of the high-priest Joiakim, the son of Jeshua (verses 12-21); and (4) a list of the chief Levitical families at the same period (verses 24-26). Of these four lists, Nos. 1, 3 and 4 may have been drawn up in the time of Nehemiah, but No. 2 in its present form must be much later.

**22, 23.** These verses come in very awkwardly, interrupting the account of the Church officers in the time of Joiakim, which is resumed in verse 24. They appear to be an addition to the original text, made about the time of Alexander the Great, when the Books of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah would seem to have first taken their existing shape. The same hand which inserted these verses probably also added to the original text verse 11. **The days of Darius the Persian.** Modern commentators are generally agreed that Darius Codomannus, the antagonist of Alexander the Great, is intended. This prince ascend-

ed the throne B.C. 336, and reigned till B.C. 331. B. C.

**27-43. Dedication of the wall.** It is not easy to imagine that the author would have separated the dedication of the wall from its completion by five chapters and a half, unless they had been separated in fact by an interval of some duration. The interval seems, by the notes of time contained in chaps. 12, 13, to have been one of nearly thirteen *years*. Nehemiah's religious reforms were certainly subsequent to the visit that he paid to the Persian court in B.C. 432 (13 : 6). These reforms grew out of a reading of the law which took place at the time when Nehemiah appointed the Temple officers (13 : 1), and that appointment followed closely on the dedication (12 : 44). The dedication of a city wall was, so far as we know, a new thing in Israel ; but it had been customary from a remote time to dedicate houses (De. 20 : 5) ; and natural piety extended this practice to aggregations of houses, and to the limit or fence by which they were practically made one. The priestly order had shown its sense of the fitness of such a consecration when they raised their portion of the wall, and had at once "sanctified it" (3 : 1). Nehemiah now, by the ceremony which he planned and carried out, placed the whole circuit of the wall under the Divine protection, confessing in this solemn act the intrinsic worthlessness of mere walls and bulwarks, unless God lends them strength and makes them a protection against enemies. P. C.

And now the time was come when, everything having been established in its rightful order, it seemed fitting that there should be a solemn dedication of the wall to Almighty God. It was not the Temple only which was viewed as a sanctuary by the more religious Jews ; but the entire city was regarded as holy—as "God's mountain" (Isa. 65 : 25)—as a sort of outer sanctuary guarding the inner sanctuary, and, therefore, as requiring to be set apart to God by a formal act of consecration. On the day appointed for this important ceremony, Nehemiah arranged two grand processions, which should girdle the city on the right hand and on the left, and meeting together at the Temple, should there sing praise to God, and "offer great sacrifices and rejoice" (verse 43). The Levites were summoned from their country districts, with their full array of the musical instruments, which still bore the name of their royal inventor, David (verse 36) ; and the minstrels gathered themselves together from their retreats in the hills of Judah and in

the deep valley of the Jordan (verses 28, 29). The priests came in their full numbers, carrying the sacred trumpets (verses 35, 41), and the princes of Judah mustered in great strength (verses 31, 32, 40). Nehemiah divided the assembled multitude into "two great companies of them that gave thanks," and placing himself at the head of the one company (verse 40), and "Ezra the scribe" (verse 36) at the head of the other, caused them to ascend the wall and make the circuit of it, part going in one direction and part in the other, rejoicing all the way and giving praise, until they met on the eastern rampart opposite the Temple, and, there taking their stand, brought the ceremony to an end by a loud antiphonal pœan of praise, in which the priests blew their trumpets, the Levites sounded their harps, cymbals and psalteries, and the singers, "with Jerahiah their overseer" (verse 42), "sang loud" and "with great joy rejoiced" (verses 42, 43). At the same time, even the women and children joined in the general acclamation, so that "the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off" (verse 43). Ezra and Nehemiah, each at the head of their own half of the procession, stood facing one the other, set before the nation as their almost co-equal guides and rulers, to be alike venerated and alike obeyed. G. R.

**27. To keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgiving and with singing.** Solomon's dedication of the Temple was the pattern followed. As he had made the service altogether one of praise and thanksgiving (2 Chron. 5 : 13), and had employed in it cymbals, trumpets, psalteries and harps (*ibid.*, verse 12), so Nehemiah on the present occasion.

**43.** "That day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced ; for God had made them rejoice with great joy ; the wives also and the children rejoiced ; so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." The constituents of true joy are : 1. *Thankfulness and praise* in the remembrance of the past and in confident anticipation of the future. The people recounted the mercies of the Lord. Their dedication of the completed walls represented their preparation by the grace of God for His worship and service ; their defence against assaults from without ; their unity and order as a people. So ought all rejoicing to be well founded on the faith which has full possession of our hearts, and the consecrated religious life which maintains that faith in practice. 2. *Purification*. "They offered great sacrifices and rejoiced." The giving out of the heart in religious wor-

ship uplifts the whole strain of the life. A great expenditure of feeling in the pleasures of this world is exhausting to the nature, but religious emotion both purifies and exalts. 3. *Fellowship.* All rejoiced together—high and low, rich and poor, the strong men, the wives and children. The true joy is not solitary and selfish, but reveals the unity of kindred minds and sympathizing hearts. Family life is elevated by the cultivation of the spirit of social worship and praise, both in the larger circle of the congregation and in the smaller of the household. All joys brighten in the atmosphere of religious joy.

**44-47.** *Nehemiah's arrangements for the Temple service, and appointment of officers.* The good resolutions of the people at the time of the renewal of the covenant would have borne comparatively little fruit had they not been seconded and rendered effective by formal action on the part of the civil authority. The people, in the first flush of their zeal, had bound themselves to undertake the conveyance of the tithes, firstfruits and freewill offerings from the country districts to Jerusalem, and the deposition of them in the Temple treasuries (10 : 37-39). But in practice this was found too great a burden (13 : 10). Nehemiah therefore appointed special officers to collect the tithes and other dues throughout the entire territory, and to bring them to Jerusalem, and lay them up in the proper chambers (verse 44). Over the chambers he appointed treasurers, whose duty it was, not only to collect the ecclesiastical dues, but also to distribute the proceeds among the individuals entitled to share in them (13 : 13). Having in this way provided for the sustenance of the clerical body, he was able to insist on their regular performance of all their duties ; and the success of his arrangements was such, that under him the Temple service was restored, not merely to the condition established by Zerubbabel (verse 47), but to one not markedly different from that which had been attained in the time of David and Asaph (verse 46). The priests, Levites, singers and porters respectively performed their duties to his satisfaction, purifying themselves, and taking the service in their turns, "according to the commandment of David and Solomon" (verse 45).

**13 : 1-31.** *Nehemiah's efforts for the reform of religion.* After having exercised the office of governor for twelve years, from B.C. 444 to B.C. 432, Nehemiah had had occasion to visit the Persian court, either to consult Artaxerxes personally on certain matters connected with

his province, or for some other reason unknown to us. During his absence various evil practices, to which some reference has been already made in connection with the renewal of the covenant (10 : 30-39), acquired so much strength, and came to such a head, that, on Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem at the expiration of a year (verse 6), he felt it necessary to take active steps to put an end to them. In the first place, intermarriages between the Jews and the neighboring heathen, like those which Ezra had dissolved twenty-five years previously (Ezra 10 : 16-44), had again occurred, and a new generation was growing up which could not speak its own language correctly (verse 24). The family of the high-priest, Eliashib, shared in this trespass. He himself was allied by marriage to the Ammonite chief, Tobiah (verse 4), and one of his grandsons had taken to wife a daughter of Sanballat, the Samaritan (verse 28). Secondly, the strict observance of the Sabbath had fallen into disrepute. Further, the payment of the tithes was very irregular ; and the Levites, who ought to have found their daily food provided for them in the Temple, not receiving their "portions" there, were forced to absent themselves from the daily service, and to support themselves by cultivating their own plots of ground (verses 10, 11). Finally, the Temple had ceased to be regarded as sacred to the Almighty ; a portion of it had been converted into a dwelling-house by the order of the high-priest himself (verse 5), and the Ammonite, Tobiah, had been allowed to take possession of it. Nehemiah tells us in this chapter the mode wherein he dealt with these various evils, treating of the mixed marriages in verses 1-3 and 23-28 ; of the profanation of the Sabbath in verses 15-22 ; of the non-payment of the tithes in verses 10-13 ; and of the desecration of the Temple in verses 4-9. The chapter is remarkable for the number of "interjectional prayers" which it contains (verses 14, 22, 29, 31), and for the plainness and roughness of the language (see especially verses 9, 17, 21, 25, 28). The authorship of Nehemiah is universally admitted. P. C.

It is tolerably clear that Ezra could not have remained at Jerusalem when Nehemiah took his departure, or the disorders of which we are about to speak would never have arisen. The simultaneous absence from Jerusalem of both Ezra and Nehemiah would necessarily bring Eliashib to the front. Accordingly, he seems to have come forward, and taken the direction of affairs. He proceeded to authorize a general relaxation of the Mosaic ordinances,

and especially of those by which Nehemiah had set most store. The people should be free to contract marriage with whomsoever they preferred, and would incur no punishment for doing so. Wives were at once taken by many of the Jews from among the Ammonites, the Moabites, and the Philistines of Ashdod. They were brought to Jerusalem and encouraged to teach their children their own forms of speech. A strange jargon began to be heard in the streets of the holy city, where infantile tongues babbled half in the Aramaic, "half in the speech of Ashdod" (18 : 24), and their mothers addressed them in the one language, their fathers in the other! Such seems to have been the rage for these marriages, that many Jews, carried away by it, wrongfully and cruelly put away their lawful native wives to take to themselves these aliens. To diminish the influence of the priests and Levites, who were the chief support of the reforming party, he seems to have connived at the non-payment of the tithes and firstfruits by those that owed them, which amounted to an absolute "robbery" (Mal. 3 : 8), and so impoverished the sacerdotal order, that they found themselves compelled to leave Jerusalem, and employ themselves in the cultivation of their own fields (verse 10). The service of the Temple must have suffered by this neglect, but Eliashib and his party were bent on amalgamating Judaism with heathenism, or, at any rate, on such a system of mutual toleration as should lead to an ultimate union and fusion. Meanwhile, they allowed the house of God to be "forsaken" (verse 11)—the choral service to be discontinued—the treasuries to become empty—and the once crowded courts to remain without either ministers or worshippers. If Eliashib, and the party which supported him, had remained much longer in power, and had succeeded in completely breaking down the wall of separation so long established between Israel and the heathen, it cannot be supposed that it would have been long before idolatrous altars would have appeared once more in Jerusalem at the corners of the streets, if they were not introduced, as they were under Manasseh, into the Temple itself. G. R.

**7-31.** When Nehemiah returned and saw this, it "grieved him sore." But he was no mere lamenter, to content himself with sighs and tears; he was a reformer of the most vigorous type. So he purified the Temple. Then he contended with the rulers about the neglect of tithes and offerings, and stopped the traffic which had been permitted on the seventh day, including a Sabbath market which the heathen

had actually set up at the gate of Jerusalem. He also repeated the strict measure of discipline which Ezra had previously enforced, insisting on the divorce of heathen wives, whom Jews had illegally married. This he did with a certain vehemence of spirit, recalling the mischief that had followed such intimacy with the heathen on the part of the wisest of their kings. "Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things?" D. F.

**7-14.** Nehemiah went in person to the Temple, and entering the "great chamber," which Eliashib had assigned to Tobiah the Ammonite, and "prepared for him" (verse 7), he "cast forth"—apparently with his own hands—"all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber" (verse 8). Then he proceeded to give orders that other chambers, similarly desecrated, should be cleansed and restored to their proper uses (verse 9). The "vessels of the house of God" were brought back and once more stored in them, together with the "meat offering and the frankincense." The priests and Levites were recalled from their several "fields," and arrangements were made for their due sustentation by the enforcement of the tithe system as recently modified by the reformers. There was a ready obedience to Nehemiah's orders. "All Judah brought the tithe of the corn, and of the new wine, and of the oil unto the treasuries" (verse 12)—the Levites flocked back, and re-entered upon their old offices—the Temple courts were once more crowded—the choral anthems arose at the set times—and Nehemiah uttered the prayer which he has put on record (verse 14).

**15-17.** In re-establishing the rightful observance of the Sabbath, again Nehemiah had "the nobles" opposed to him, together with a large portion of the commercial classes. Once more, he tells us, he had to "contend." G. R.

**19. When the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath.** The Jews have always reckoned their days from sunset to sunset, grounding their practice on the account of the Creation given in the first chapter of Genesis, where "the evening and the morning" are said to constitute each of the six days. There was also a special command that the "Sabbath" of the great day of atonement should be kept "from even to even" (Lev. 23 : 32). **I commanded that the gates should be shut.** The gates would as a matter of course have been shut at sunset. Nehemiah required that the closing should take place some half-hour earlier, when the shadows were lengthening, and

the day was drawing toward a close. He regarded it as a sort of desecration of the Sabbath to carry on secular work to the last allowable moment. **That there should be no burden brought in.** Foot passengers were no doubt allowed to enter and leave the city on the Sabbath, Nehemiah's servants being set to see that under no pretence should merchandise be allowed to enter. P. C.—The method adopted may yield suggestions for all who would aim at reforming abuses or public immoralities. One most necessary step is to cut off, as far as possible, opportunities for the sin. There will be no trade if you shut the gates the night before: There will be little drunkenness if there are no liquor shops. It is quite true that people cannot be made virtuous by legislation, but it is also true that they may be saved temptations to become vicious by it. A. M.

**20. The merchants lodged without.** The merchants could not leave their wares unguarded; and the wares not being admitted into the town, they were obliged to camp out. Thus a crowd was collected about the gates, and a disturbance and excitement caused, which was unsuitable for the Sabbath. To prevent this, Nehemiah threatened to arrest the merchants, whereupon the practice was given up (verse 21). P. C.—Another hint comes from Nehemiah's vigorous word to the country folk outside the wall. There is need for very strong determination and much sanctified obstinacy in fighting popular abuses. They die hard. It is permissible to invoke the aid of the lawful authority. But a man with strong convictions and earnest purpose will be able to impress his convictions on a mass, even if he have no guards at his back. The one thing needful for Christian reformers is, not the power to appeal to force, but the force which they can carry within them. And it is better when the traders love the Sabbath too well to wish to drive bargains on it, than when they are hindered from doing as they wish by Nehemiah's strong will or formidable threats. A. M.

*Nehemiah's Views on the Sabbath.* It is held by critics of a certain type that the Sabbath, in Nehemiah's time, was essentially a recent institution. But he himself certainly regarded it as ancient (verse 18), and as having been anciently of so much importance that the profaning of it was a reason for the calamities that had befallen Israel. In his mind the obligation to abstain from work on the Sabbath seems to be the same as in the case of the other holy days prescribed in the law (Neh. 10 : 31). In

any case, Neh. 9 : 14 explicitly mentions the Sabbath as one of the institutions given through Moses at Sinai. W. J. B.

It is easy to ridicule the Jewish Sabbath and "the Puritan Sunday." No doubt, there have been and are well-meant but mistaken efforts to insist on too rigid observance. No doubt, it has been often forgotten by good people that the Christian Lord's Day is not the Jewish Sabbath. Of course, the religious observance of the day is not a fit subject for legislation. But the need for a seventh day of rest is impressed on our physical and intellectual nature; and devout hearts will joyfully find their best rest in Christian worship and service. The vigor of religious life demands special seasons set apart for worship. A. M.

**22.** He concludes this passage with a prayer, in which observe the petitions, "Lord, remember me," that is enough; God's thoughts to usward are very precious (Ps. 40 : 5). He adds, "Spare me; so far is he from thinking that what he had done did properly merit a reward in strict justice, that he cries earnestly to God to spare him. The best saints, even when they do the best actions, stand in need of sparing mercy, for "there is not a just man that doeth good, and sinneth not." The plea, "According to the greatness (or multitude) of Thy mercies." H.—After all, and when he had done all, he trusted in nothing that he had either gained or done; but the more he was laden with the fruits of righteousness, the more he felt himself to be laden with infirmities; so that, however illustrious he was in the eyes of his fellow-men, he felt that before his God he had no plea to urge, save "the mercy that endureth forever." This, therefore, was his lowly prayer—"Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me, according to the greatness of Thy mercy." *Stowell.*—Nehemiah had no false notion of his own goodness; for, while he asked for recompense for these good deeds of his, he could not but add, "Spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy." He who asks to be "spared" must know himself in peril of destruction; and he who invokes "mercy" must think that, if he were dealt with according to justice, he would be in evil case. So the consciousness of weakness and sin is an integral part of this prayer, and that takes all the apparent self-righteousness out of the previous petition. However worthy of and sure of reward a Christian man's acts of love and efforts for the spread of God's honor may be, the doer of them must still be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." A. M.

**23-25.** But the chief struggle in this second reformation of Nehemiah's was the same as that which had engaged and absorbed the attention of Ezra when he first visited Judea—the contention with regard to the mixed marriages. Here men's feelings were excited to the highest possible pitch, and here he had for open antagonists persons of the very highest rank and position. Where the culprits belonged to the common herd he brooked no opposition. But a son of Joiada, and grandson of Eliashib the high-priest, Manasseh by name, had not only contracted one of the prohibited marriages (10 : 30), but had taken to wife a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, the chief of the foreign adversaries of Nehemiah (2 : 10, 19 ; 4 : 1, 7 ; 6 : 1, 2, 5, 12), and therefore a person peculiarly obnoxious to him. Nehemiah required him to put this woman away. Bolder than his grandfather, he met the command of the governor with a determined resistance—he would not part with his wife. Supported by a certain number of his order (13 : 29), he defied the Tirshatha. Nehemiah on his part was equally stanch—in his capacity of civil governor he passed on his opponent a sentence of exile (verse 28). The recalcitrant priest did not dare to remain ; but, in quitting the country, he seems to have formed a resolution to take refuge in Samaria with his father-in-law, and to establish there a worship and a temple, which should be permanent rivals of the worship and Temple at Jerusalem, should be always open to discontented members of the Judean community, and should present to the world a form of the Jehovistic religion less severe than that of the Judeans, simpler and more attractive. The result was the erection, on the lofty eminence known as Mount Gerizim, of the Samaritan sanctuary of Jehovah, wherein Manasseh was installed as high-priest, which continued for three centuries to be a thorn in the side of Judah, a refuge for traitors and renegades, a centre of hostility and antagonism, a constant source of trouble and difficulty. Manasseh, no doubt, from one point of view, had his revenge ; but, from another, it may be questioned whether he did not render, quite involuntarily, an important service to Judaism. As Kuenen remarks, "Had not Samaria stood open to the discontented Jews, perhaps the field would not have been cleared and the resistance to the new tendency" (*i.e.*, to Nehemiah's reforms) "quelled so easily. Now that a refuge had been opened to them in the immediate neighborhood, they could the sooner resolve to give up the struggle—from which they could scarcely hope to come out as con-

querors." The practical result is, that with Manasseh's withdrawal opposition ceases ; the reforms are established ; and the newly freed nation grows up upon the lines which Ezra and Nehemiah have laid down, not upon those which would have been preferred by Manasseh and Eliashib. G. R.

**23, 24.** We do not know what "the Jews' language" was at the time, whether it was Hebrew or Aramaic. Considering, however, how large a proportion of the returned exiles belonged to the priestly order, we might presume that Hebrew would still be used in the upper ranks of the community, and this presumption is borne out by the fact that nearly all the post-exilic books are in the old language of Israel. On the whole, it seems most probable that the Hebrew of the Old Testament did not become wholly extinct as a living tongue until contact with the Greeks had introduced another rival to it in the shape of Greek. Hebrew disappeared before the influence of Aramaic and Greek, just as completely as Aramaic and Greek themselves have since disappeared in Palestine before the influence of Arabic. Long before this happened, Old Testament Hebrew had naturally become filled with "Aramaisms"—that is, with words or forms of words and expressions which were borrowed from Aramaic. *Sayce.*

**25.** From this verse and from Ezra 10 : 18-22, it is evident that the priests especially were subjected to the severe discipline exercised by Ezra and Nehemiah with respect to mixed marriages. Such discipline was the more needful in proportion as the needy condition of the colony affected the state of public worship, and begot indifference and discouragement among the priesthood (see Mal. 1 : 6 ; 2 : 9). *Oehler.*

**31.** Nehemiah refers himself to God to recompense him, takes Him for his paymaster, and then doubts not but he shall be well paid. This may well be the summary of our petitions ; we need no more to make us happy than this, "Remember me, O my God, for good." H.

Ezra and Nehemiah are brought before the reader somewhat fully. Their personal characters stand out in the strong light of words spoken, deeds done, sympathies manifested. It is rare that we meet with nobler men, of purer motive, more earnest spirit and of more unselfish natures. How eminently prayerful ! How pure and sweet is the simplicity of their devotion to the cause of God ! It is refreshing to come into contact with such men, to feel the

power of such examples, and the inspiration of such spirits. They may have had blemishes of character, or sins of life; but if so, the record passes them unnoticed. Let us be thankful for such recorded lives. H. C.

Probably in the later portion of his civil governorship Nehemiah was brought into contact with the last of the prophets, Malachi, a man thoroughly after his heart. Malachi denounces, with a vigor worthy of Isaiah himself, those special sins against which Nehemiah was never tired of contending—the intermarriage with heathen women, involving, as it too often did, repudiation of innocent and loving Jewish wives, whose unhappy lot caused them to bathe the altar with their tears (Mal. 2 : 13); the withholding of tithes and offerings, which he regards as absolute robbery of the Almighty (*ibid.* 3 : 8, 9); the oppression of the poor (*ibid.*, verse 5), against which Nehemiah so strenuously exerted himself; the demoralization of the priesthood (Mal. 1 : 6 : 2 : 1-10), patent in the cases of Eliashib and Manasseh, and the general irreligion and laxity (Mal. 1 : 13, 14 ; 2 : 17 ; 3 : 5, 7). He re-echoes Nehemiah's condemnations, but even in stronger terms. He tells the priests that they "despise" and "profane God's name" (*ibid.* 1 : 6, 12), that they "are departed out of the way" (*ibid.* 2 : 8), have "corrupted the covenant of Levi," have "caused many to stumble," and have been "partial" in their exposition of the law (*ibid.* 2 : 9). He calls the people "thieves and robbers" (*ibid.* 3 : 8, 9), "adulterers, sorcerers, false swearers, treacherous dealers" (*ibid.* 2 : 14), "committers of abomination in Israel and in Jerusalem" (*ibid.* 2 : 11). He tells them that they are "cursed with a curse." G. R.

#### JERUSALEM—PAST AND PRESENT.

Seven cities, each famous in history, have, during a period of more than four thousand years, been successively reared on the site of the four hills and intervening valleys, that are known by the common name of Jerusalem.

With regard to the original city, its antiquity as a walled town dates at least forty centuries before our time. The Jebusites, after the conquest of Palestine, lay safe behind the colossal walls of Zion for four hundred and fifty years, till David surprised the stronghold by gaining

admission through a water-course. Twenty-two years after the storming of Zion, the Jebusite Araunah, "as a king," ceded to the king of Israel the site which was afterward divided between the precincts of the Temple and the courts and gardens of the palace; and enormous wrought stones, artificially channelled (that their monolithic grandeur might not dwarf the smaller though yet gigantic blocks of the masonry of Solomon), yet tell why one of the neighboring ravines was called the "valley of the giants."

David, Solomon, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah and Manasseh were the builders of regal Jerusalem. They enclosed and adorned Moriah, defended Ophel by a wall that united the fortification of Zion to Moriah; drew around the base of the hill, to the north and west, the wall known as the first wall of Josephus, and constructed a subterranean conduit. The peculiar features of the work of Solomon, the rusticated megalithic ashlar, the shouldered lintels, hollowed into the resemblance of true arches, the rude Phœnician letters traced by the quarrymen and stone-hewers of Hiram, the cisterns and culvert of the conduit are yet to be recognized by the character no less than by the localities of the work. Regal Jerusalem stood for four hundred and sixty-six years.

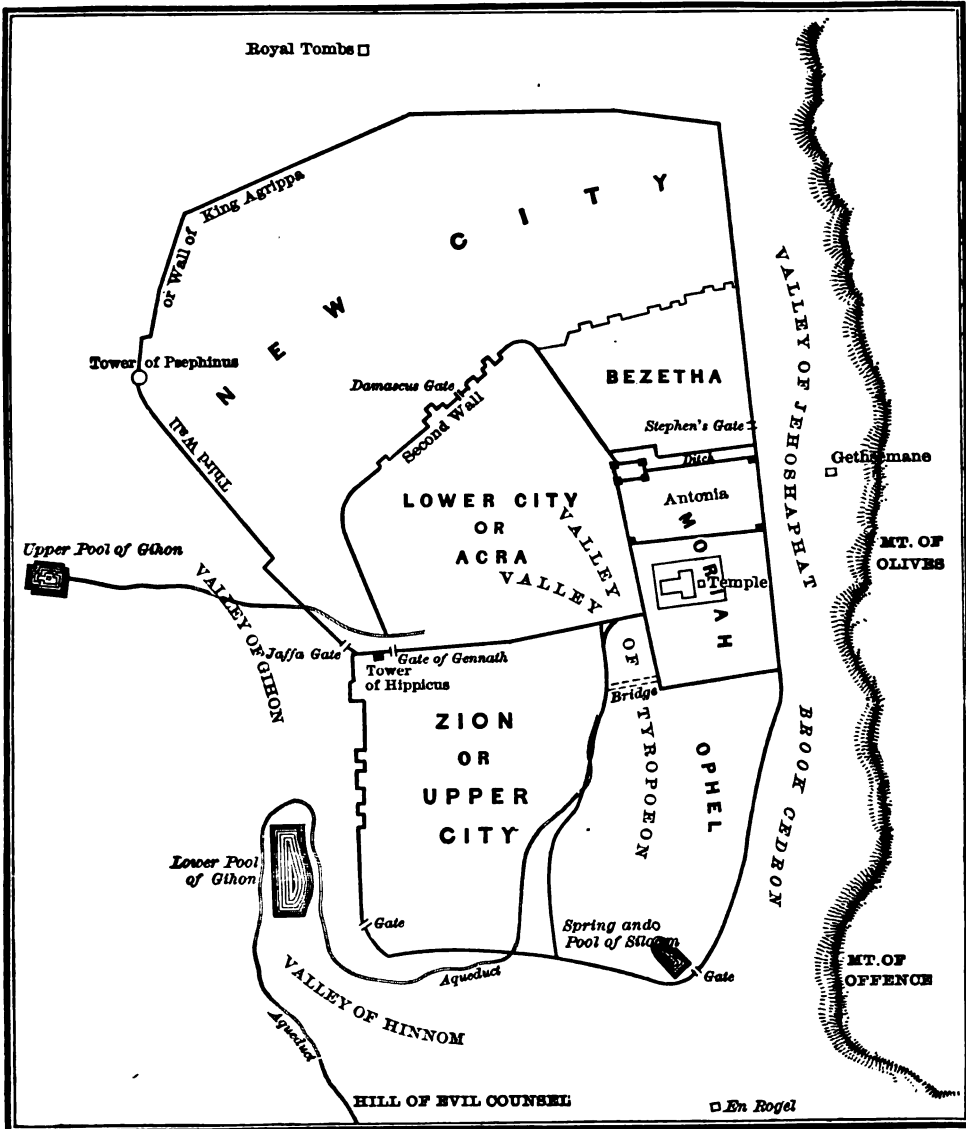
Sacerdotal Jerusalem dates from the restoration inaugurated by Zerubbabel, after the partial demolition effected by Nebuchadnezzar, to the more complete destruction resulting from the siege by Titus, a period of six hundred and six years. Nehemiah "the Tirshatha," Judas Maccabæus, Jonathan, Simon, Hyrcanus, Herod the Great and Agrippa, the fourth Idumean king, were the principal builders during this period. Hadrian and Constantine, Julian and Justinian, were the builders of Roman Jerusalem. There is no mistaking the traces of their handiwork. Altars, entablatures, deeply incised rude Roman inscriptions, architectural fragments, even one or two portions of statues, or of statuettes, attest their pagan origin. Crosses and Christian inscriptions, and the introduction of a cruciform plan for buildings, yet to be traced in the foundations, commenced during this period of five centuries.

The Persian and Arabic rule over the holy city endured, including the brief interval of restored Christian sway under Heraclius, for four hundred and eighty years. Moorish tiles are almost the only relics of this period to be distinguished in the museum. On the actual site exists very much that tells of the Arab occupation. The ninety years of the crusaders

and of the Norman kings of Jerusalem have left relics remarkable for their value, if not for their number.

The seventh permanent occupation of Jerusalem has been that of the Moslem, commencing with the capture by Saladin, and enduring, first under the Saracens and then under the

Turkish caliphs, to our own day. Dilapidation, dirt, misery and decay have waited on the Turkish rule; and it is no trifling achievement to have obtained authority from the sultan to raise any portion of the veil which long neglect has drawn over the relics of Jerusalem. *Brit. Quarterly.*



Outline of Ancient Jerusalem. (Robinson modified.)



# BOOK OF ESTHER.

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## Section 65.

THIS is a book of Divine providence. It is written to show how God, without manifesting Himself as He had done in Judea, watched over the Jews in a strange land, and under the power of the heathen. The charm of the history is this, that while everything proceeds in a manner quite natural, and there is no introduction of miracles or prodigies, all the incidents are so nicely adjusted to the production of the great result, that if one had been wanting, or been otherwise than it was, the whole plan would have been deranged, and the issue could never have been reached. The time occupied by this story falls in between the going up of Zerubbabel from Babylon to Jerusalem, and that of Ezra. The Persian empire, in which Babylon was then included, was at its height of greatness, extending from the Indus to the Mediterranean, and from the Caspian to Arabia. The Ahasuerus who occupied the throne was most probably the Xerxes of profane history. His winter palace was at Susa or Shushan, and his court was luxurious and extravagant to a degree which we can scarcely conceive. D. F.

The Book of Esther stands in the English Bible at the close of the historical books ; it does not, however, form a link in the connected series, as it only relates to an episode in the history. It has, moreover, features of its own which distinguish it broadly from the historical books, and indeed from all the other books of the Old Testament. It takes its name from the Jewish maiden who became queen of the Persian king Ahasuerus, and it was written doubtless with the primary purpose of explaining the institution of the feast of Purim, which originated mainly through her means. In the Hebrew Bible it stands among the Hagiographa, the third division of the canonical books, as one of the five rolls, and by the later Jews has come to be esteemed almost as highly as the law itself. *J. Robertson.*

The Book comes to us with an external record that is above suspicion. We receive it from those vigilant and scrupulous guardians of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish people ; and with the most assuring commendation on their part. Their learned rabbis are united in including it among those Scriptures distinguished as the *Hagiographa*, the emphatically sacred books ; and even among these, assigned it the first rank. The internal evidence is equally satisfactory. Like the other books of the Hebrew canon, it deals with the fortunes of the Jewish people, and is fully in keeping with their well-known characteristics. Mordecai and Esther were Jews of the clearest and most unquestionable type. The providence of God, in the deliverance of His people, stands out in this book in as distinct outline as in their rescue from the Egyptian bondage or from the Babylonian captivity. The record is everywhere true, moreover, to the Medo-Persian dynasty and character. It shows us just what the profane histories show us, only with greater minuteness and fidelity. *Street.*

The Book of Esther relates an episode in Jewish history of intense interest to the entire nation at the time, since it involved the question of its continuance or destruction, but an episode which stood quite separate and distinct from the rest of Jewish history, unconnected with anything that preceded or followed, and which, but for the institution of the feast of Purim, might as easily have been forgotten by the people as escaped perils too often are by individuals. The main scene of the narrative is Susa, the Persian capital ; the *dramatis personæ* are either Persians or "Jews of the dispersion." There is no mention, in the whole Book, of Palestine, or Jerusalem, or the Temple, or the provisions of the law, nor any allusion to any facts in previous Jewish history, excepting two : 1. The Captivity under Nebuchadnezzar (chap. 2 : 6). 2. The subsequent

dispersion of the Jews over all the various provinces of the Persian empire (chap. 3 : 8). Thus the events related belong, primarily, not to the history of the Palestinian Jews, but to that of the "Jews of the dispersion;" and it is as indicating that those Jews were, no less than their brethren in Palestine, under the Divine care, that the Book appealed to the hearts of the Jewish race generally, and claimed a place in the national collection of sacred writings. The mere process of eliminating impossible kings conducts us to Xerxes, the son of Darius, and father of Longimanus, as the personage really meant. And here we find, in the first place, that the names are identical, the Hebrew *Akhashverosh* corresponding letter for letter with the Persian *Khshayarsha*, which the Greeks turned into Xerxes. Secondly, the resemblance of character is most striking, and is admitted on all hands. Thirdly, the notes of time exactly accord with the chronology of Xerxes' reign. "In the third year of Xerxes' reign was held an assembly at Susa to arrange the Grecian war (Herod. vii. 7). In the third year of Ahasuerus was held a great feast and assembly at Shushan the palace (Esth. 1 : 3). In the seventh year of his reign Xerxes returned defeated from Greece, and consoled himself by the pleasures of the harem (Herod. ix. 108). In the seventh year of his reign 'fair young virgins were sought' for Ahasuerus (Esth. 2 : 2-15)." We may therefore confidently regard the Ahasuerus of Esther as the well-known invader of Greece and scourger of the Hellespont, who has come down to us in profane history as "Xerxes." P. C.—From the cuneiform alphabet of the ancient Persians we learn that Ahasuerus or Akhashverosh is the Hebrew form of the Persian Khshayarsha, called Xerxes in Greek. Two kings of this name ruled over Persia; but as the second reigned for only a couple of months, he cannot possibly be the Ahasuerus of Esther. The latter must be the famous monarch of Greek story, whose huge armaments melted away before Greek valor at Salamis and Plataea. The character of Ahasuerus, too, agrees well with that of Xerxes I. Weak, vain, cowardly and capricious, Xerxes I. was the only Persian monarch known to us who could have acted in the way described in the Book of Esther. Xerxes has left inscriptions at Persepolis, at Elvend (near Ekbatana), and at Van in Armenia, which are couched in the same language as those of his father, Darius. *Sayce*.

The reader will notice that, taking Ahasuerus to be Xerxes, the events of this Book fall after

the dedication of the second Temple (second year of Darius) and *before* the labors of Ezra and Nehemiah (from the seventh to the thirty-second or some later year of Artaxerxes Longimanus). As to locality, the reader will see that these events transpire, not in Judah, and not where they would directly affect the colony there save through sympathy; but in Shushan, the capital of the Medo-Persian empire. The Book shows that Jews in considerable numbers were scattered over that empire, many in Shushan itself. Of their fortunes under a special exigency during the reign of Xerxes this book gives an account.

The name of the author of this book cannot be ascertained with any certainty. He gives details so minutely that he must have lived on the spot. His allusions to Persian life and manners, luxury, customs and history, harmonize so entirely with what comes to us through the Greek historians as to compel the same conclusion. The writer knew too much of the Persians to have lived elsewhere than there and then. Some think the book was written by Mordecai. It is probably safe to say—by him, or at least under his eye. As to purpose and aim, the author recognizes the feast of Purim; indeed, makes great account of it as an established institution; probably was active in making it such; and consequently prepared this history of the events that culminated in that commemorative festival. Those events were worthy of this commemoration. God's hand in them from first to last was so signally manifest, the lessons they taught could not fail to be at once impressive and instructive. But though God's hand was in these events too plainly manifest to be mistaken or unnoticed, yet His name is not here, not being even once written in this Book. We are left in no doubt that Mordecai believed in God's covenant with His people and in His promises of salvation in their behalf (4 : 14), and that both he and Esther believed in prayer, though they do not name prayer, but only fasting, when it seems plain enough that prayer is in their thought as truly as fasting. H. C.

The language of the Book closely resembles that of Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah, which were all written about that time. The minute and particular accounts of many matters which would be known primarily only to Esther and Mordecai, and would certainly not have been written in the "Book of the Chronicles," as Mordecai's genealogy (2 : 5), Esther's messages to Mordecai and Mordecai's to her through Hatach (4 : 5-16), the circumstances of the two

banquets given by Esther to Ahasuerus and Haman (5 : 6-8 ; 7 : 2-8), etc., make it probable that the writer was contemporary with the events narrated, and derived his information from Mordecai or Esther, or both. Further, the individuals who have been mentioned as the writers of the Book—Mordecai himself and the high-priest Joiakim—lived about this time. Altogether, it seems most probable that the work was composed about the middle of the fifth century B. C., or a little later, when Xerxes had been dead about twenty years. P. C.—The minuteness of the details, and the frequent reference to events and persons which presuppose an acquaintance with Persia, go to show not only that the author lived in Persia—which indeed is admitted on all sides—but also that he lived before the overthrow of the Persian power. At the same time it is evident from the first verse of the Book that the reign of Xerxes was already over, as well as from the last verse but one, where it is stated that “all” his acts were written in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia. As we have seen, the character of the language of the book would tend to make it a little later than the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and we may therefore assent to the opinion of those commentators who place its composition toward the end of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus (B. C. 425). *Sayce*.

It is remarkable that the name of God is not once mentioned in Esther. The only religious ideas introduced with any distinctness are the efficacy of a national humiliation (4 : 1-8), the certainty that punishment will overtake the wicked, and a feeling of confidence that Israel will not be forsaken (4 : 14). Various conjectural reasons have been given for this reticence. One thing is clear, that a Jew of later times would have taken care not to raise suspicion against his work by such an omission. . . . It would seem that the reticence of the author of Esther respecting his religious views was the result of habit. The Jews, bred up among the heathen, and living in constant intercourse with them, learned by degrees to keep back the expression of their religious convictions, to assimilate themselves externally to their masters, to eliminate from their ordinary discourse all that would mark them for Jews, while they clung internally to their old belief, and practised secretly their old customs. A century and a half of this dissimulation made it so habitual that it was not laid aside, even where there was no occasion for it. The Jew of the dispersion kept his religion in his heart of hearts, and

spoke of it as little as possible. It may have helped to keep Esther free from the religious element, if it was *in the main* extracted from the Persian archives. We do not know on what scale these were written, but it is quite possible that they contained most of our present Esther. At any rate, if the author took them for his basis, and found them, as he might, altogether secular in tone, he would be naturally led to assimilate to them his own portions of the work. Finally, it must be granted that the whole difficulty is not overcome by these considerations, and it may well be that other circumstances also, which cannot be particularized, prevented the author from giving expression to the religious feelings and beliefs which he entertained, and which underlie his narrative.

The omission of the name of God, and the slightness of the religious element in the book, which have been mentioned as its most remarkable characteristics, do not deprive it of *canonicity*. The name of God is not found in Canticles, which has, nevertheless, “all the external marks of canonicity possessed by any other book of the Old Testament not expressly cited in the New.” The religious element is lacking from large portions of all the historical books, yet those portions are as much canonical as the parts most penetrated by the religious spirit. The fact is that canonicity, in the case of an historical book, does not necessarily imply more than that the history is true, and the moral bearing of the work such as to accord with the highest religious enlightenment of the time and people for which the work was written. G. R.—It is allowed on all hands that there must be an *historical* foundation to the book ; and the more candid of sceptical critics admit that the main circumstances of the narrative, which at first sight appear improbable, are not so if the peculiarly extravagant and capricious character of the Persian monarch, whom the author calls Ahasuerus, be taken into account. B. C.—The latest critic is struck, not with “difficulties” or with “mistakes” in the narrative, but with the fact that the whole of it is “thoroughly characteristic,” all the various scenes being “full of the local genius of the empire, as we know it alike through the accounts of the earliest Greek travellers and the latest English investigators.” The accord acknowledged in this sentence is indeed most striking ; the suitability of all the main facts related to the personal character of Xerxes cannot be disputed ; the notes of time fit in with what we know of his reign exactly ; it is quite inconceivable that a poet or a romancer, writing one hundred and

fifty or two hundred years after the events (which is the hypothesis of modern sceptical critics), should have been at once so full, so graphic, and so correct. We are, therefore, thrown back upon the opposite theory, that the writer was a contemporary, that he was familiar with the Persian court under Xerxes, and that the harmony observable between his narrative and all that we otherwise know of the time is to be referred to the unity and congruity of truth. An historical romancer necessarily involves himself in discrepancies and contradictions; the truthful narrator has nothing of this kind to fear, since with every statement that is true *all* the facts of the case must harmonize. P. C.

It is impossible that any reasonable mind should reflect long upon what is implied in such an observance as the feast of Purim, celebrated by the Jews all over the world, beginning some four or five centuries before Christ, and never intermitted, and see how every root and fibre of it is contained in this book, and not find itself held fast by the demonstration and the conviction that the events were real. If we should find a collision between this and the declarations of profane history, the latter must give way. But there is no such collision. There is simply, as in all ancient history, the task of finding the true order and succession of the events, and locating them as they seem to have occurred in the order of time, or of cause and effect. *Street.*—No other account has ever been given, or can be given, of the origin of the feast of Purim, which the Jews keep to this day. Nothing but its historic truth can account for the inclusion of Esther in the canon. The more candid of modern sceptical critics confess it to be "incontestable that the feast of Purim originated in Persia, and was occasioned by an event similar to that related in Esther." May we not say, having exposed the weakness of the historical objections, that it was occasioned by the events there related, and by none other? G. R.

It is difficult to read the Book of Esther with impartial eyes without being struck by its local coloring, its minuteness of detail, and its general agreement with historical facts. The very objection that has been brought against its authenticity from the long period of time which elapsed between the decree against Vashti and the choice of a new queen turns out to be a strong testimony in its favor. It is one of those undesigned coincidences which certify the genuineness of an ancient document better than a thousand arguments. A romancer would never

have remembered that the third year of Xerxes was the beginning of his preparations against Greece, and that from that moment to his sixth or seventh year he was either absent from Susa or occupied with Grecian affairs. Nor is it likely that a romancer or a mere Jewish legend would have assigned a name like that of Mordecai to their hero. Mordecai means "belonging to Merodach," and was one of those names which was adopted by apostatizing or religiously indifferent Jews from their Babylonian neighbors. So distinctively heathen a name would never have been selected for a Jewish champion by the "hagadist" or moral romance-writer of a later day. But the existence of the feast of Purim proves better than anything else the reality of the history which explains its origin. From the second century before the Christian era down to our own day we have contemporary evidence of its observance, and throughout that long period of time it has been kept by the Jewish people with an intensity of fervor which only the events recorded in the Book of Esther can explain or justify. Nay, more; the word Purim has no etymology in Hebrew, and must have been imported from abroad. The word is interpreted "lot" in chap. 3 : 7, and may have the same root as the Latin *pars* and *partio*. But it has not yet been met with in the fragments of the old Persian language preserved in the inscriptions of Darius and his successors.

We have only to compare the Hebrew Book of Esther with the apocryphal Greek additions to it, to see what a contrast there is between the genuine and the false. As soon as we pass to the Greek additions, we stumble at once on anachronisms and historical misstatements which betray the age to which they belong. Haman is changed into a Macedonian, Ahasuerus is made to call the Jews "the elect nation," and to wish that their enemies may descend into Hades or "hell," and Esther boasts that she "had never eaten at the table of Haman." Had the Hebrew Book of Esther been a Hagadah or religious romance of the Ptolemaic era, it also would have contained plenty of statements like these. *Sayce.*

#### *Relation of the Book of Esther to the Law.*

Whatever else may be said of this book, no one will deny that it is intensely Jewish. It is true that the name of God does not occur in it, but surely the hand of God is recognized virtually in such places as 9 : 1, 22 ; 10 : 3 ; 2 : 17 ; 4 : 14. There may be no direct reference to the law of Moses, though the conduct of the Jews

in chap. 9 : 10, 15, 16, is singularly in accordance with the provisions of the law in De. 7 : 26 ; 13 : 17, more especially when contrasted with the king's permission in chap. 8 : 11 ; but their national distinctness, and their complete isolation from all the people of other lands, is markedly set forth and witnessed to as an authentic fact ; and how is this to be accounted for but by the peculiar and distinctive character of the law, which explicitly marked them out from all other people (De. 7 : 6), and provided for their separation partly by the rite of circumcision, but still more by its own statutes and judgments (De. 4 : 8, 33, 34, etc.) ? No writer, however, would be so rash as to maintain that the law of Moses as we have it now was not in existence at the time when the Book of Esther was written. From its silence, therefore, we can draw no argument adverse to the authority of that Law ; while the Book itself, when it speaks of Jews being found throughout the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire of Ahasuerus (8 : 9), is a sufficient and suitable witness to the fulfilment of the threatenings of the law at Lev. 26 : 33 ; De. 4 : 27 ; 28 : 64. We may consequently hold it for certain that traces of the influence of the law are not wanting in the Book of Esther ; and that by its relation thereto it is seen to possess a substantial unity with other literary monuments of the Old Testament. *Leathes.*

*Suggestions of the Book of Esther.*

How the providence of God watched over the Jews that were returned out of captivity to their own land, and what great and kind things were done for them, we read in the two foregoing books ; but there were many who stayed behind, having not zeal enough for God's house, and the holy land and city, to carry them through the difficulties of a removal thither ; these, one would think, should have been excluded the special protection of Providence, as unworthy the name of Israelites ; but our God deals not with us according to our folly and weakness. We find in this book, that even those Jews who were scattered in the

provinces of the heathen were taken care of, as well as those who were gathered in the land of Judea, and were wonderfully preserved when doomed to destruction and appointed as sheep for the slaughter. H.

It is well that God should have vindicated as His own a mere piece of honest, plain, straightforward, secular history, written by a God-fearing person, and the chief actors in which were God-fearing persons, that so we may feel that history itself is God's, and a true record of it a godly work—a work which He will accept and approve, whether or no He be explicitly referred to in it, whether or no it be made a vehicle of direct religious instruction, whether or no the characters held up for approval have the sacred name upon their lips, if only they have it in their hearts. P. C.

The doctrine of God's providence finds here an historic, pictorial parable. There is behind human affairs an unseen hand. Both evil and good have their ultimate awards. The prosperity of the wicked is unsafe and unsatisfying, ending in adversity. The adversity of the good is a trial of faith, issuing in prosperity. Retribution is administered with poetic exactness. The most minute events are woven into God's plan. Providence is not fate, but consists with prayer and resolve, freedom and responsibility. The name of God is not found here. His is a secret control of the affairs of His people ; a *hidden hand* shifts the scenes. Only the eye of faith sees the Divine factor in human history, but to the attentive observer all history is a burning bush aflame with the mysterious Presence. *Pierson.*

The Book of Esther is to be held in everlasting remembrance, if only as showing to all ages and to all peoples how much the heavenly love and care concern themselves with those who themselves have no care to keep God's commandments, and no thought of the care and love that are concerned about them. The shepherd watches and seeks the sheep, and throws around them, unseen, protections all through the wilderness where they wander. *A. Raleigh.*

## Section 66.

## THE FEAST AT SUSA. VASHTI'S DISPLACEMENT BY ESTHER. MORDECAI'S SERVICE TO THE KING.

ESTHER, CHAPS 1, 2.

1 : 1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from  
 2 India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces :) that in those  
 3 days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the  
 4 palace, in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants ;  
 5 the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him :  
 6 when he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty  
 7 many days, even an hundred and fourscore days. And when these days were fulfilled, the  
 8 king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both great and  
 9 small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace ; *there were hangings of*  
 10 *white cloth, of green, and of blue, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings*  
 11 *and pillars of marble : the couches were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and*  
 12 *white, and yellow, and black marble. And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the*  
 13 *vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the*  
 14 *bounty of the king. And the drinking was according to the law ; none could compel : for*  
 15 *so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to*  
 16 *every man's pleasure. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house*  
 17 *which belonged to king Ahasuerus. On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was*  
 18 *merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and*  
 19 *Carcas, the seven chamberlains that ministered in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring*  
 20 *Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the peoples and the princes*  
 21 *her beauty : for she was fair to look on. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's*  
 22 *commandment by the chamberlains : therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger*  
 23 *burned in him. Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the*  
 24 *king's manner toward all that knew law and judgement ; and the next unto him was Carshena,*  
 25 *Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and*  
 26 *Media, which saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom :) What shall we do unto the*  
 27 *queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not done the bidding of the king Ahasuerus*  
 28 *by the chamberlains ? And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the*  
 29 *queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the peoples*  
 30 *that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen shall come*  
 31 *abroad unto all women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes, when it shall be*  
 32 *reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but*  
 33 *she came not. And this day shall the princesses of Persia and Media which have heard of the*  
 34 *deed of the queen say the like unto all the king's princes. So shall there arise much contempt*  
 35 *and wrath. If it please the king, let there go forth a royal commandment from him, and*  
 36 *let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that*  
 37 *Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus ; and let the king give her royal estate unto*  
 38 *another that is better than she. And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be*  
 39 *published throughout all his kingdom, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their hus-*  
 40 *bands honour, both to great and small. And the saying pleased the king and the princes ;*  
 41 *and the king did according to the word of Memucan : for he sent letters into all the king's*  
 42 *provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after*  
 43 *their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and should publish it accord-*  
 44 *ing to the language of his people.*

2 : 1 After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was pacified, he remembered  
 2 Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her. Then said the king's  
 3 servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king : and  
 let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather

together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hegai the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women ; and let their things for  
 4 purification be given them : and let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king ; and he did so.

5 There was a certain Jew in Shushan the palace, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair,  
 6 the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite ; who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captives which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Neb-  
 7 uchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle's daughter : for she had neither father nor mother, and the maiden was fair and beautiful ; and when her father and mother were dead, Mordecai took her for his own  
 8 daughter. So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was taken into the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the  
 9 women. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him ; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with her portions, and the seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king's house : and he removed her and her maidens to the  
 10 best place of the house of the women. Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred :  
 11 for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of  
 12 her. Now when the turn of every maiden was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that it had been done to her according to the law for the women, twelve months, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six  
 13 months with sweet odours, and with the things for the purifying of the women,) then in this wise came the maiden unto the king, whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her  
 14 out of the house of the women unto the king's house. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines : she came in unto the king no more, except  
 15 the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name. Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them  
 16 that looked upon her. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the  
 17 tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins ; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of  
 18 Vashti. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast ; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the bounty of the  
 19 king. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in  
 20 the king's gate. Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people ; as Mordecai had charged her : for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up  
 21 with him. In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay  
 22 hands on the king Ahasuerus. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who shewed it unto  
 23 Esther the queen ; and Esther told the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name. And when inquisition was made of the matter, and it was found to be so, they were both hanged on a tree : and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

**1 : 1-9.** *The great feast at Susa.* King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) in the third year of his reign, which was B.C. 484-483, entertained at a great feast in the royal palace of Susa all his princes and his servants, "the power of Persia and Media," together with all the nobles and princes of the provinces (verses 2, 3). The hospitality was extended over a space of one hundred and eighty days (verse 4). At the end of this time there was a further entertainment for seven

days, on even a more profuse scale, all the male inhabitants of Susa being feasted in the palace gardens (verses 5-8), while the queen received the women and made them a feast in her own private apartments. The special occasion of the entertainment seems to have been the summons to Susa of all the chief men of the kingdom, and particularly of the satraps, or "princes of provinces," to advise upon the projected expedition against Greece, which

Herodotus mentions in his seventh book. Banquets on an enormous scale were not uncommon in Persia; and the profuseness and vain-glory of Xerxes would naturally lead him to go to an extreme in this, as in other matters. P. C.

**1. This is Ahasuerus.** The writer assumes that more than one Ahasuerus is known to his readers, and seeks to make it clear to them which Ahasuerus he is speaking of. First, he notes that the subject of his narrative is a real king, and, therefore, not the Ahasuerus of Daniel (9 : 1); secondly, that he ruled "from India to Ethiopia," and, therefore, belonged to the later portion of the Persian series, since it was well known that the earlier Persian monarchs were not masters of India. He thus sets aside the Ahasuerus of Ezra 4 : 6 (Cambyses), and points with sufficient clearness to Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspes. **From India even unto Ethiopia.** The empire of Xerxes is rightly described as lying between these extremes; for though Ethiopia was not regarded as a "province," and is, therefore, absent alike from the Greek and the native lists, yet it paid a tribute (Herod. iii. 97), and, therefore, owned a certain degree of subjection. B. C.

The name Xerxes is simply a less correct variant of the name Ahasuerus; and Esther's husband was no other than the Xerxes whose exploits are so familiar to all students of Greek history. The Bible story fits at every point all that we know concerning this Xerxes, and does not fit the reign of any other Persian king. W. J. B.—Any later king is out of the question. Being thus brought back to Xerxes, whose name is the Greek form of Ahasuerus, it only remains to compare the dates of the Book of Esther with the history of his reign, the leading events of which are, his accession in B. C. 486 (December 28d), his expedition to Greece in his sixth year, B. C. 480, and his death at the end of his twenty-first year, B. C. 465 (December 17th). Now the great feast of Ahasuerus, at which Vashti refused to appear, was in the third year of his reign, B. C. 483, the very year in which Xerxes held a great assembly to arrange the Grecian war, and his marriage with Esther was in his seventh year, B. C. 479, the year after the expedition to Greece, when Xerxes might naturally seek in his harem some consolation for his repulse. But Amestris, who was the daughter of Otanes, the uncle of Xerxes, had been his wife long before the expedition to Greece, in which her sons were old enough to accompany him, and the eldest of them, Darius, married at the very time of his

father's marriage to Esther. For all these reasons Esther cannot be Amestris; and, considering the polygamy of the Persian kings, it is not surprising that Herodotus should mention only two of the wives of Xerxes, and the Book of Esther two others. The affairs of Xerxes after his flight from Greece are only noticed by the Greek historians as they affect the Hellenic race. P. S.—The synchronisms, remarked by Eichhorn, strongly confirm this view. In the third year of his reign, Ahasuerus summons a divan of all the great officers of the kingdom at Susa, whom he entertains and banquets one hundred and eighty days. In his third year, Xerxes, at a great assembly, deliberates and takes measures for the subjugation of Greece. In his seventh year (B. C. 479) Ahasuerus marries Esther. In his seventh year Xerxes returns, discomfited, to Susa, and abandons himself to the pleasures of his harem. The imbecile facility with which Xerxes, according to Herodotus, first gave up to his seductive mistress, Artaynta, a splendid robe, the present of his queen; and then, having made a rash promise at a banquet, yielded up the wife of his brother Masistes (the mother of his mistress) to the barbarous vengeance of his queen; so precisely resembles the conduct of Ahasuerus, that it is impossible not to suspect we are reading of the same person in the Grecian and Hebrew annalist. *Milman.*

**3. Shushan.** The great Persian, or, rather, Elamitic, city of Susa—"Shushan" in the Hebrew—was a city of a high antiquity, which for many centuries had been the capital of an important state, and had held a position little inferior to that of Nineveh or Babylon. It was situated between the Choaspes and Eulæus rivers, in a fertile plain, within sight of the Bakhtiyari Mountains, about eighty miles east of the Tigris. The tract about it was clothed for a great part of the year with an abundant vegetation. In Susiana, "after the winter rains, which last from December till March, the entire surface of the ground puts on a livery of green, diversified with numerous brilliant flowers, and a rich pasturage is everywhere afforded to the flocks and herds of the inhabitants. The heat, though considerable, is not oppressive. In the distance can be seen the snow-clad range of the Bakhtiyari Mountains, rising to an elevation of from eight thousand to ten thousand feet above the level of the sea, in a continuous undulating line void of peaks or of any prominent features, while the breeze which blows from them is almost always cool and refreshing."



Susa was a city of a considerable size. Its ruins at the present day consist of "four spacious artificial platforms, distinctly separated from each other." The most elevated of these is toward the west, and is washed by the Shapur. It attains a height of one hundred and nineteen feet above the river, and is believed to represent the ancient acropolis or citadel. To the north of this is a square mass of ruins, about a thousand feet each way, which was certainly the site of the royal palace in Persian times. Southeast of these two mounds, and much exceeding in size both of them put together, is the third or "great central platform," which attains an elevation of about seventy feet, and covers an area of sixty acres. These three together formed the Upper City, and appear to have been known as *Shushan-lu-birah*, "Susa the fortress," or "Susa the palace." Further eastward, and at a lower level, are various irregular groups of ruins, and one extensive platform of comparatively slight elevation, which constituted the Lower town, and was inhabited probably by the poorer classes of the population. There are considerable remains, even at the present day, of the ancient Persian palace. Its main feature was a great pillared hall, closely resembling, both in dimensions and ornamentation, the famous "Hall of Xerxes" at Persepolis, whereof it was perhaps the model. A central phalanx of thirty-six columns, arranged in six rows of six each, supported probably a solid roof, and formed a "throne room" or "hall of audience," two hundred feet each way, "the largest interior of the ancient world, with the single exception of the great hall of Karnak, which covered 58,800 square feet, while this only extended to 40,000." G. R.

**3. In the third year of his reign he made a feast.** In this year (B. C. 488) Xerxes, according to Herodotus, assembled the governors of provinces at Susa, in connection with his contemplated expedition against Greece. Councils were held, speeches were made, and at last formal orders were issued to the satraps to prepare their several contingents. The governors would be guests at his table during their stay. **Persia and Media.** The position of Media, as second only to Persia under the Achæmenian princes, is clearly apparent both in the native monuments and in the accounts of the Greeks. Medes held many of the highest offices both under Darius and under Xerxes. B. C.

The feast made in his third year synchronizes with the great assembly which Herodotus says

Xerxes held to consider his plans for conquering Greece. As long as Xerxes was busy and self-conscious with that greatest military expedition of history, he probably did not miss Vashti very much. But three years later, after his defeat at Salamis, in September of his sixth year, and his sudden return home without any millions of soldiers following him, he was less self-sufficient, and "remembered Vashti." He consoled himself for the disasters that had befallen him by his magnificent plans for securing a new queen. W. J. B.

The Persian court under the later Achæmenian monarchs was organized on a scale of extraordinary splendor and magnificence. Cyrus and Cambyses had been comparatively simple in their habits; even Darius, the son of Hystaspes, had not launched out into much extravagance; but from the time of Xerxes, the son of this Darius, to the close of the empire, a profusion and prodigality prevailed scarcely equalled either before or since in any other Oriental monarchy. The centre and culminating point of the magnificence was, of course, the person of the king. Glorious in his apparel, clothed in robes of richest silk, purple or crimson in hue, and adorned with embroidery in gold, wearing the *kidaris*, or tall, stiff cap, encircled with the diadem—a fillet or band, blue, spotted with white—the great king was the cynosure of all eyes, the centre of attraction, the principal luminary around which all the minor lights of the court revolved. We are shown him in the Persepolitan sculptures seated upon his throne, with his feet resting upon a footstool, and with his sceptre in his right hand, receiving those who prostrate themselves before him, or again advancing in procession, followed by the parasol-bearer and other attendants, passing through the royal apartments on his way to the throne room or the banquet chamber. Other officers of the court were the steward of the household; the groom or master of the horse; the chief eunuch or keeper of the women; the king's "eyes" and "ears," or persons whose business it was to keep him informed on all matters of importance; his scribes, or secretaries, who wrote his letters and his edicts; his messengers, who went his errands; his "ushers," who introduced strangers to him; his "tasters," who tried the various dishes set before him, lest they should be poisoned; his cupbearers, who handed him his wine and tasted it; his chamberlains, who assisted him to bed; and his musicians, who entertained him with singing and instruments of music. Besides these the court comprised, among its inferior

officers, various classes of guards, and also door-keepers, huntsmen, grooms, cooks, and other domestic servants in great abundance, together with a vast multitude of visitors and guests—princes, nobles, captives of high rank, foreign refugees, ambassadors, travellers. We are assured that the Persian king fed daily within the precincts of his palace as many as *fifteen thousand* persons. G. R.

4. For six months Xerxes kept "open house," and, with the ostentation which was one of his chief characteristics, displayed his wealth and luxury in prodigal hospitality to thousands of the officers of government, who doubtless came and went as they had occasion. *Alcott.*

The feast of Ahasuerus was a wonderful scene. There is nothing morally great about it. There never can be about mere feasting, and splendor, and eating and drinking, and outward show. Neither, so far as we can see, is there anything morally wrong in this, at least when kept in due moderation. It was kept in moderation in this instance. There is the most prodigal abundance, and yet there is a royal wisdom in the dispensation of it. For we read that "the drinking was according to the law," and that law means "no compulsion." If we embody the principle of moderation in our life, and walk by faith, and not by sight, then, and only then, we surmount the poor pageant in which outwardly we are moving figures; then, and only then, we cast anchor within the veil, and lay up treasure where it can never be lost. *Raleigh.*

5. An especial closing banquet is now given to all the men who are dwelling or visiting in the royal town. Literally it is a *drinking*, the word being the same as in 1:3.

7. The remaining expression describes the free abundance of this costly drink, as worthy of so rich and magnificent a king. "With a liberal hand," or "in right royal fashion," would be a correct interpretation. *Alcott.*

10-22. *The disgrace of Vashti.* On the seventh day of the feast "to all in Shushan" (verse 5), the king having excited himself with drink, sent a message to Vashti, requiring her to make her appearance in the banquet of the men, since he desired to exhibit her beauty to the assembled guests, as "she was fair to look on" (verse 11). Such a proceeding was a gross breach of Persian etiquette, and a cruel outrage upon one whom he above all men was bound to protect. Vashti, therefore, declined to obey (verse 12). Preferring the risk of death to dishonor, she braved the anger of her despotic lord, and sent

him back a message by his chamberlains that she would not come. To an absolute monarch such a rebuff, in the face of his whole court and of some hundreds or thousands of assembled guests, must have been exasperating in the extreme. "Therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him." But he so far restrained himself as to refer the matter to the judgment of others, and ask the "seven princes" the question, "What is to be done according to law unto Queen Vashti, for not performing the commandment of the king?" (verse 15.) The advice of the princes, uttered by one of their body (verses 16-20), and assented to by the remainder (verse 21), was, that Vashti should be degraded from the position of queen, and her place given to another. This sentence was supported by specious arguments based upon expediency, and ignoring entirely the outrageous character of the king's command, which was of course the real, and sole, justification of Vashti's disobedience. It was treated as a simple question of the wife's duty to obey her husband, and the husband's right to enforce submission. Ahasuerus, as might be expected, received the decision of his obsequious counselors with great satisfaction, and forthwith sent letters into all the provinces of his vast empire, announcing what had been done, and requiring wives everywhere to submit themselves unreservedly to the absolute rule of their lord (verse 22). P. C.

14. **The seven princes which saw the king's face.** According to Herodotus, there were seven families of the first rank in Persia, from which alone the king could take his wives. Their chiefs were entitled to have free access to the monarch's person. The Behistun inscription, which gives Darius six coadjutors in his conspiracy, confirms the Greek writer. B. C.

16. **And Memucan answered.** We gather from Memucan's reply that the Persian law had provided no penalty for the case in hand. He first argues the matter on general grounds of morality (verse 16) and expediency (verses 17, 18), and then proposes the enactment of a new law—a *privilegium*—assigning Vashti a special punishment for her contempt of the king's order. The "decree" (verse 20) would not have been necessary had there already existed a law on the point. Memucan throws himself wholly on the king's side—in-sinuates no word of blame against his royal master, on whom in justice the whole blame rested; but sets himself to make the worst he can of Vashti's conduct. P. C.—Memucan's

words are shrewd, bespeaking one wise in human nature, and in the peculiar variety thereof found in an Oriental despot. He first artfully exaggerates the offence of the queen into an evil which it was for the interest of every husband in the empire to have at once checked. He then suggests a decree which would have this effect, and finally describes the beneficial results to be expected from its enactment.

**18-19.** Persia is placed before Media because it had now assumed the precedence; while in Daniel the order of the names is adapted to the Median viceroy then upon the throne. *Alcott.*

**20.** The idea here is that the women will come to regard their husbands as peculiarly valuable and rather precarious possessions, against the alienation of which they need to guard with peculiar care. W. J. B.

**22.** Besides publishing the decree, Ahasuerus sent letters prescribing certain things—viz. : 1. That every man should bear rule in his own house. 2. That every man should speak his own language in his family, and not that of his wife if it were different. This is the plain meaning of the existing text. P. C.

**That every man should bear rule in his own house.** This decree has been called "absurd" and "quite unnecessary in Persia." But it may be questioned whether the decree was unnecessary. The undue influence of women in domestic, and even in public, matters is a feature of the ancient Persian monarchy. Herodotus tells us that Atossa "completely ruled" Darius. Xerxes himself was, in his later years, shamefully subject to Amestris. The example of the court would naturally infect the people. The decree therefore would seem to have been not so much an idle and superfluous act as an ineffectual protest against a real and growing evil.

**Chap. 2:1. After these things.** The events here related (verses 1-11) must belong to the time between the great assembly held at Susa in Xerxes' third year, B. C. 483, and the departure of the monarch on his expedition against Greece in his fifth year, B. C. 481. It is impossible to fix their date more exactly. B. C.

**5, 6.** One of God's chosen people now comes upon the scene—a man, a Jew—as we should say, "a certain Jew." The name *Mordecai* is probably connected with Marduk or Merodach, the Assyrian god. "It may have been given to his son by a Babylonian Jew without thought of heathen derivation and meaning, or out of compliment to some Babylonian friend or master."

**7. Uncle.** An uncle on the father's side,

literally, a friend. Esther's father, Abihail (verse 15), and Mordecai's father, Jair, were brothers. Esther was probably twenty years old, and Mordecai could not have been less than thirty or forty, since it appears that he adopted his cousin when she was young. *Alcott.*

**11. Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house.**

Mordecai occupied, apparently, a humble place in the royal household. He was probably one of the porters or doorkeepers at the main entrance to the palace. This position separated him from his adopted daughter, and some effort was needed to keep up communication with her. B. C.

**15.** It was the mark of unusual wisdom and self-restraint, if not of even nobler qualities, that Esther in this supreme hour manifested no self-will concerning her adornments, but left it to those whose judgment was better than her own. *Alcott.*

**16.** Four years after the disgrace of Vashti, probably in January, B. C. 479. Xerxes had recently returned from the Grecian expedition defeated and disgraced. He was glad to dismiss warlike matters from his thoughts, and to console himself for his failure by the pleasures of the seraglio.

**19-23. Mordecai's discovery of a plot against Ahasuerus' life.** Some time after Esther had been made queen, there was a second collection of virgins at Susa (verse 19), under circumstances which are not related, and which were probably of small importance. *At this time* (verse 21) Mordecai, still serving in his humble office at the palace gate, from which he had not been advanced since Esther had told no one that he was her relation (verse 20), happened to detect a conspiracy against the king's life which had been formed by two of the palace eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, whom Ahasuerus had somehow offended (verse 21). Being still in the habit of holding communication with Esther, Mordecai was able to make her acquainted with the facts, of which she then informed the king, telling him how she had obtained her knowledge (verse 22). There was nothing surprising or suspicious in a eunuch of the palace having had speech with the queen, especially when he had intelligence of such importance to impart to her. On inquiry, the king found that Mordecai's information was correct; the conspiracy was laid bare, and the conspirators put to death (verse 23)—the facts being, as was sure to be the case, entered in the court chronicle, a daily record of the life of the court and of the circumstances that befell the king. It was to have

been expected that Mordecai would have been rewarded for his zeal ; but somehow or other it happened that his services were overlooked—he was neither promoted from his humble office, nor did he receive any gift (chap. 6 : 3). This was quite contrary to ordinary Persian practice. P. C.

**21. Sought to lay hand on the king.** Conspiracies inside the palace were ordinary occurrences in Persia. Xerxes was ultimately murdered by Artabanus, the captain of the guard, and Aspamitras, a chamberlain and eunuch. B. C.

**19. Gate of the king.** The gate of an Oriental palace is not a mere entrance, but is ordinarily flanked at least by recesses for guards, sometimes by towers containing rooms below and overhead. It was often a place for holding courts, and even for royal audience. Hence Sublime Porte (gate), which originally meant the chief entrance of the Sultan's palace, has come to denote the government of the Turkish Empire. *Alcott.*

**20.** Esther's silence accounts for Mordecai's low estate ; Mordecai's command (see verse 10) accounts for Esther's silence. The royal dignity did not change Esther's heart. She was still the dutiful child she had been so many years. Mordecai had forbidden her to tell her kindred ; he had not removed his prohibition, so she had kept silence. P. C.—That mind is truly great and noble that is not changed with the highest prosperity ; and such was the disposition of Queen Esther, whom even the splendor of royalty could not induce to disregard her

kinsman and friend, or to depart from a dutiful observance of his directions.

**21-23.** Mordecai overhears the whispering of these wicked conspirators, and reveals it to Esther. She, as glad of such an opportunity to commend unto Ahasuerus the loyalty of him whom she durst but secretly honor, reveals it to the king. The circumstances are examined ; the plot is discovered ; the traitors executed ; the service recorded in the Persian annals. *Bp. H.*

Mordecai sets before us the example of a faithful subject, in counteracting the treasonable designs of these men ; he showed this loyalty toward a heathen sovereign and one under whom he lived as a captive, true religion and loyalty being inseparable ; and herein he exemplified the injunction of the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah, " Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives" (Jer. 29 : 7). Mordecai discreetly communicated his discovery not to indifferent persons, but to the queen : Esther, in laying it before the king, dutifully remembered Mordecai, and commended him to the royal favor by mentioning him as the author of her information. *Bp. Andrewes.*

**23. It was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.** Mordecai was thus registered in the public annals as the author of this service done to the crown : the circumstance of his name being so recorded became afterward the occasion of his advancement, and of great events treated of in the sequel of this book. *Pyle.*

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## Section 67.

### HAMAN'S DEVICE TO DESTROY THE JEWS. MORDECAI'S CHARGE TO ESTHER ACCEPTED.

ESTHER, CHAPS. 3, 4.

**3 : 1** AFTER these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed down, and did reverence to Haman : for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not down, nor did him reverence. Then the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment ? Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand : for he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not down, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath. But he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone ; for they had shewed

him the people of Mordecai : wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were 7 throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai. In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth 8 month, which is the month Adar. And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom ; and their laws are diverse from *those of* every people ; neither keep they 9 the king's laws : therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them. If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed : and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those that have the charge of the *king's* business, to bring it into the king's 10 treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of 11 Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is 12 given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee. Then were the king's scribes called in the first month, on the thirteenth day thereof, and there was written according to all that Haman commanded unto the king's satraps, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the princes of every people ; to every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language ; in the name of king 13 Ahasuerus was it written, and it was sealed with the king's ring. And letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth *day* of 14 the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey. A copy of the writing, that the decree should be given out in every province, was published 15 unto all the peoples, that they should be ready against that day. The posts went forth in haste by the king's commandment, and the decree was given out in Shushan the palace : and the king and Haman sat down to drink ; but the city of Shushan was perplexed.

4 : 1 Now when Mordecai knew all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry : and he came even before the king's gate : for none might enter within the king's 2 gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and 3 weeping, and wailing ; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. And Esther's maidens and her chamberlains came and told it her ; and the queen was exceedingly grieved : and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take his sackcloth from off him : but he received it 4 not. Then called Esther for Hathach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and charged him to go to Mordecai, to know what this was, and 5 why it was. So Hathach went forth to Mordecai unto the broad place of the city, which was 6 before the king's gate. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and the exact sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the 7 Jews, to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was 8 given out in Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her ; and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and 9 to make request before him, for her people. And Hathach came and told Esther the words 10 of Mordecai. Then Esther spake unto Hathach, and gave him a message unto Mordecai, 11 *saying* : All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law for him, that he be put to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live : but I have not been called to come in 12, 13 unto the king these thirty days. And they told to Mordecai Esther's words. Then Mordecai bade them return answer unto Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in 14 the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall relief and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall perish : and who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom 15, 16 for such a time as this ? Then Esther bade them return answer unto Mordecai, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day : I also and my maidens will fast in like manner ; and so will 17 I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law : and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

**3:1-6.** *Mordecai, by want of respect, offends Haman, Ahasuerus's chief minister. Haman, in revenge, resolves to destroy the entire nation of the Jews.* A break, probably of some years, separates chap. 2 from chap. 3. In the interval a new and important event has occurred—a new character has made appearance upon the scene. Haman, the son of Hammedatha, an Agagite (whatever that may mean), has risen high in the favor of Ahasuerus, and been assigned by him the second place in the kingdom. He has in fact become "grand vizier," or chief minister. In the East men are so servile that a new favorite commonly receives the profoundest homage and reverence from all classes, and royal orders to bow down to such an one are superfluous. But on the occasion of Haman's elevation, for some reason that is not stated, a special command to bow down before him was issued by Ahasuerus (verse 2). All obeyed as a matter of course, excepting one man. This was Mordecai the Jew. He would not do as his fellows did, not even when they remonstrated with him and taxed him with disobedience to the royal order (verse 3). In the course of their remonstrances—probably in order to account for his reluctance—Mordecai stated himself to be a Jew (verse 4). It would seem to have been after this that Haman's attention was first called by the other porters to Mordecai's want of respect. Haman was violently enraged (verse 5); but instead of taking proceedings against the individual, he resolved to have the Jews exterminated (verse 6). P. C.

These events are dated in the twelfth year of his reign, at some time between the thirteenth day of the first month and the twenty-third day of the third month (Esth. 3:12; 8:9); probably nearer the latter date. This was 474 B. C., forty-two years after the dedication of Zerubabel's temple, and sixteen years before Ezra went to Jerusalem. W. J. B.

**2. Mordecai bowed not.** It is most likely that Mordecai regarded the required prostration, usual though it was, as trenching on the reverence due to the Supreme Being, and refused on religious grounds. Hence his opposition led on to his confession that he was a Jew (verse 4). B. C.—*And this trivial circumstance, this slight to the pride of the haughty noble, led to all that follows in the story.* Though occupying the highest place to which a subject could aspire, treated by the monarch's order with well-nigh the reverence due unto himself, Haman was yet sorely angered because *one of the multitude beneath him dared to refuse personal homage.* B.

**6. Haman sought to destroy all the Jews.** In the West such an idea as this would never have occurred to a revengeful man; but in the East it is different. There massacres of a people, a race, a class, have at all times been among the incidents of history, and would naturally present themselves to the mind of a statesman. The Magophonia, or the great massacre of the Magi at the accession of Darius Hystaspes, was an event not fifty years old in the twelfth year of Xerxes, and was commemorated annually. A massacre of the Scythians had occurred about a century previously (Herod. i. 106). B. C.—Haman scorns to take up with the blood of Mordecai. This were but a vulgar amend. It is a Jew that hath despised him; all the whole nation of the Jews shall perish for the scorn of this one. The monarchy of the world was now in the hand of the Persian. As Judea was within this compass, so there was scarce a Jew upon earth without the verge of the Persian dominions. The generation, the name, shall now die at once. Neither shall there be any memory of them but this: "There was a people, which, having been famous through the world for three thousand four hundred and fourscore years, were in a moment extinct, by the power of Haman, for default of a courtesy." *Bp. H.*

**7. Haman casts lots to obtain a lucky day for his enterprise, and obtains a day in the month Adar, the last month of the year.** Having determined on a general massacre of the Jews on a given day, Haman thought it of supreme importance to select a fortunate day. By recourse to "the lot" he obtained, as the right day for his purpose, the 13th of Adar, which was more than ten months distant. P. C.

The practice of casting lots to obtain a lucky day obtains still in the East, and is probably extremely ancient. Assyrian calendars note lucky and unlucky days as early as the eighth century B. C. Lots were in use both among the Oriental and the classical nations from a remote antiquity. **From day to day, and from month to month.** A lot seems to have been cast, or a throw of some kind made, for each day of the month and each month of the year. The day and month which obtained the best throws were then selected. B. C.—By a comparison of dates we find that he had an interval of some eleven months previous to the day of massacre in which to prepare for the execution of his bloody purpose. We cannot suppose that so long a delay was agreeable to his vengeful disposition; but his superstitious mind did not venture to strike the blow previ-

ous to the arrival of the day supposed to have been designated by the gods which he worshipped. That the Divine hand, unknown to Haman, guided the lot, and arranged for the long interval in which the deliverance of the Jews might be wrought out, is certain. *Haley.*

The lot was made to fix the time to the remotest possible period to be within the year, so that the execution was delayed for almost a complete year, affording time not only for the subversion of the plot at court, but for the arrival of the messengers who were despatched with the counteracting decree. That the name of God does not once occur here is a remarkable fact. But God *Himself* is there, though His name be absent. We trace Him at every step through this wonderful book, and everywhere behold the leadings of His providence. God not in the Book of Esther! If not there, where is He? To our view, His glory—the glory of His goodness, in caring for and shielding from harm His afflicted Church, shines through every page. *Kitto.*

**8-15.** *Haman persuades Ahasuerus to publish a decree commanding the destruction of all the Jews in his kingdom on the ensuing thirteenth day of Adar.* It remained for Haman to bring his proposal before Ahasuerus in such a shape as should secure his acquiescence in it. For this purpose he sought, first, to raise a prejudice against the Jews by representing them as bad subjects, causing trouble through the peculiarity of their own laws, and still more through their unwillingness to render obedience to the Persian laws (verse 8). He also appealed to the king's cupidity, which constituted his main reliance. If the king gave his consent to the destruction of the Jewish nation, Haman undertook to pay into the royal treasuries, out of his private means, a sum which cannot be estimated at much less than two millions and a quarter of pounds sterling, and which may have amounted to a much higher figure (verse 9). Ahasuerus at once took his signet-ring from his finger and made it over to his minister (verse 10), thus enabling him to promulgate any decree that he pleased, and he openly declared that he gave over the Jewish nation, their lives and properties, into Haman's hands (verse 11). The king's scribes were put in requisition—a decree was composed, numerous copies of it made, the royal seal affixed to each (verse 12), and a copy despatched forthwith to each governor of a province by the royal post, ordering the complete destruction of the Jews within his province, young and old, men, women, and children, on the thirteenth day of the month Adar,

and the confiscation of their property (verse 13). The posts started off with all speed, "being hastened by the king's commandment" (verse 15); and the two men who had plotted a nation's extermination, as if they had done a good day's work, and deserved refreshment, "sat down to drink." But the Persians generally were less satisfied with the decree than their monarch and his minister; it surprised and startled them; "the city Shushan was perplexed." P. C.

**8.** "That they have laws of their own were not so unsufferable, if they did observe thine, O king; but these Jews, as they are unconfortable, so they are seditious. They keep not the king's laws." Thou slanderest, Haman. They could not keep their own laws if they kept not the king's; for their laws call them to obedience unto their sovereigns. In all those hundred and seven and twenty provinces, King Ahasuerus hath no subjects but them. They obey out of conscience; others, out of fear. *Bp. H.*

Haman says they were dispersed among all the provinces of the empire. This dispersion must have been in a great part voluntary, as they had the same liberty, both civil and religious, as the other nationalities of the empire. The predicted misery of their doom of expatriation had been hard to bear while the power of Babylon remained unbroken, but almost immediately afterward their status was essentially changed. The conquerors were naturally their deliverers and friends. Wherever the Medes and Persians found disaffection or hatred of the Babylonish power, there they found their allies and helpers, and were predisposed to favor them. The Jewish people have always shown a marked ability to make the best of the most adverse circumstances, and still more to turn to account every change that has been made in their favor. *Street.*

**9.** Now, when all these are laid together, the baseness and dispersedness of the people, the diversity of the laws, the irregularity of their government, the rebellion of their practice, the inconvenience of their toleration, the gain of their extirpation, what could the wit or art of man devise more insinuating, more likely to persuade? How could it be but Ahasuerus must needs think, since he could not suspect the ground of this suit, "What a zealous patriot have I raised, that can be content to buy off the incommmodity of the state at his own charge! How worthy is he rather of the aid, both of my power and purse!" "The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as seemeth good to thee." *Bp. H.*

**10.** The employment by the Persian monarchs of a signet, by which they authenticated decrees and other documents, is strongly marked in Esther, where the royal signet is mentioned no fewer than five times. The late researches in Mesopotamia, which have brought to light signets of several earlier monarchs, have yielded one such memorial of a Persian king. This is the signet cylinder of Darius Hystaspes. It represents the monarch as engaged in the chase of the lion amid a palm-grove, seated in a chariot, driven by an unarmed charioteer. On the left side of the pictorial representation is a bi-lingual inscription (Persian and Scythic) which tells us that the monarch represented is "Darius, the great king." Whether the signet of Ahasuerus which he took from Haman and gave to Mordecai (8 : 2) was a cylinder or a ring is perhaps doubtful ; but, on the whole, probability is in favor of its having resembled the signet of Darius. G. R.

**11. The silver is given thee, the people also.** Not "the silver which thou hast given me is given back to thee," for the ten thousand talents had not been given, but only offered. Rather, "the silver of the people is given thee, together with the people themselves, to do with both as it pleases thee." Confiscation always accompanies execution in the East, and the goods of those who are put to death naturally escheat to the crown, which either seizes them or makes a grant of them. Compare chap. 8 : 11, where the property of those of the Jews' enemies who should suffer death is granted to those who should slay them. P. C.

**The people also.** It has been said to be "incredible" that any king should thus sacrifice a whole people to the offended dignity of a minister ; but even De Wette allows that such an act is in keeping with the character of Xerxes, and, being told of him, is credible. In fact, it is on a par with many acts of Oriental despots. B. C.

**12.** The satrap, or supreme civil governor of each department, was "charged with the collection and transmission of the revenue, the administration of justice, the maintenance of order, and the general supervision of the territory." Each satrap was appointed by the king, and removable at pleasure, but while in office was despotic, as being the representative of the great king. *Haley*.

**13.** Xenophon says : "I find that Cyrus set on foot another contrivance beneficial to his vast empire, by means of which he gained early information of what was doing in remote parts

of his dominions. He formed establishments of stables, horses, and attendants, as far distant from each other as a horse could travel with ease in one day ; and at each of these stations he appointed a person to receive and transmit the letters brought by the messengers, and to see that the men and horses were taken care of after their journey, and that fresh ones were sent forward. Sometimes these journeys were not intermitted during the night ; the messenger to whose turn it fell to travel at night proceeding as he who had travelled during the day." *Parkhurst*.

**The thirteenth day of the twelfth month.** There are full eleven months betwixt the first sending forth of the bloody edict and the time of executing the same. Herein, on the one side, his folly is discovered ; and, on the other side, God's wise providence is manifested. His folly in putting off the execution to so long a time ; for he might have suspected that something or other might have intervened to hinder so cruel a design, which was so long made known before it was executed. God's wise providence was manifested in ordering a means to prevent that plot before the time of executing it. *Ainsworth*.

The Jews at present keep three days—the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th of Adar—as connected with "the feast of Purim," but make the 13th a fast, commemorative of the fast of Esther (chap. 4 : 16), and keep the feast itself on the 14th and 15th. B. C.

**15. Perplexed.** The Jews no doubt had shown themselves a quiet, industrious, well-disposed people. They had gained many friends. Besides, the extermination of a whole people by such arbitrary slaughter must have seemed, as it was in reality, a *dangerous precedent*. Who could tell what people or race would next fall under the king's ban ? No wonder that the capital was "perplexed." And how terribly laconic the latter word !

**Chap. 4 : 1. Knew.** The matter may have transpired through the publication of the edict ; or possibly the king's scribes had mentioned it to other officials of the court, and so it had become known throughout the palace before the edict appeared. *Haley*.

**11.** Clearly Esther sees and calmly she tells Mordecai the tremendous risk which following his counsel would bring. Note that she does not refuse. She simply puts the case plainly, as if she invited further communication. "This is how things stand. Do you still wish me to run the risk ?" That is poor courage which has to shut its eyes in order to keep itself up to



the mark. Unfortunately, the temperament which clearly sees dangers and that which dares them are not often found together in due proportion, and so men are over-rash and over-cautious. This young queen with her clear eyes saw and with her brave heart was ready to face peril to her life. Unless we fully realize difficulties and dangers beforehand, our enthusiasm for great causes will ooze out at our fingers' ends at the first rude assault of these. So let us count the cost before we take up arms, and let us take up arms after we have counted the cost. Cautious courage, courageous caution, are good guides. Either alone is a bad one.

**13, 14.** Mordecai's grand message is a condensed statement of the great reasons which always exist for self-sacrificing efforts for others' good. His words are none the less saturated with devout thought because they do not name God. This porter at the palace gate had not the tongue of a psalmist or of a prophet. He was a plain man, not uninfluenced by his pagan surroundings, and perhaps he was careful to adapt his message to the lips of the Gentile messenger, and therefore did not more definitely use the sacred name. It is very striking that Mordecai makes no attempt to minimize Esther's peril in doing as he wished. He knew that she would take her life in her hand, and he expects her to be willing to do it, as he would have been willing. It is grand when love exhorts loved ones to a course which may bring death to them, and lifelong loneliness and quenched hopes to it. Think of Mordecai's years of care over and pride in his fair young cousin, and how many joys and soaring visions would perish with her, and then estimate the heroic self-sacrifice he exercised in urging her to her course.

His first appeal is on the lowest ground. Pure selfishness should send her to the king; for, if she did not go, she would not escape the common ruin. So, on the one hand, she had to face certain destruction; and, on the other, there were possible success and escape. The argument holds in reference to many forms of conflict with national and social evils. If Christian people allow vice and godlessness to riot unchecked, they will not escape the contagion in some form or other. How many good men's sons have been swept away by the immoralities of great cities! How few families there are in which there is not "one dead," the victim of drink and dissipation! How the godliness of the Church is cooled down by the low temperature around! At the very lowest, self-preserva-

tion should enlist all good men in a sacred war against the sins which are slaying their countrymen. Mordecai goes back to the same argument in the latter part of his answer, when he foretells the destruction of Esther and her father's house. There he puts it, however, in a rather different light. The destruction is not now, as before, her participation in the common tragedy, but her exceptional ruin while Israel is preserved. The unfaithful one, who could have intervened to save, and did not, will have a special infliction of punishment. That is true in many applications. Certainly, neglect to do what we can do for others does always bring some penalty on the slothful coward; and there is no more short-sighted policy than that which shirks plain duties of beneficence from regard to self.

But higher considerations than selfish ones are appealed to. Mordecai is sure that deliverance will come. He does not know whence, but come it will. How did he arrive at that serene confidence? Certainly because he trusted God's ancient promises, and believed in the indestructibility of the nation which a Divine hand protected. How does such a confidence agree with fear of "destruction"? The two parts of Mordecai's message sound contradictory; but he might well dread the threatened catastrophe, and yet be sure that through any disaster Israel as a nation would pass, cast down, no doubt, but not destroyed. How did it agree with his earnestness in trying to secure Esther's help? If he were certain of the issue, why should he have troubled her or himself? Just for the same reason that the discernment of God's purposes and absolute reliance on these stimulates and does not paralyze devout activity in helping to carry them out. If we are sure that a given course, however full of peril and inconvenience, is in the line of God's purposes, that is a reason for strenuous effort to carry it out. Since some men are to be honored to be His instruments, shall not we be willing to offer ourselves? There is a holy and noble ambition which covets the dignity of being used by Him. They who believe that their work helps forward what is dear to God's heart may well do with their might what they find to do, and not be too careful to keep on the safe side in doing it. The honor is more than the danger. "Here am I; take me," should be the Christian feeling about all such work.

The last argument in this noble summary of motives for self-sacrifice for others' good is the thought of God's purpose in giving Esther her position. It carries large truth applicable to us

all. The source of all endowments of position, possessions, or capacities is God. His purpose in them all goes far beyond the happiness of the receiver. Dignities and gifts of every sort are ours for use in carrying out His great designs of good to our fellows. Esther was made queen, not that she might live in luxury and be the plaything of a king, but that she might serve Israel. Power is duty. Responsibility is measured by capacity. Obligation attends advantages. Gifts are burdens. All men are stewards, and God gives His servants their "talents," not for selfish squandering or hoarding, but to trade with, and to pay the profits to Him. This penetrating insight into the source and intention of all which we have carries a solemn lesson for us all. A. M.

This is a day wherein great things are doing and grievous things are a-suffering by many of our brethren; therefore you should be working this day. This is a day in which sons of Belial—men that will not have Christ's yoke—are combining to break it and cast His cord from them. Then join this day to help Christ, else, as Mordecai said to Esther, so I may say to you in reference to the present opportunity: if you altogether hold your peace, hold your purses and hold your hand at this time, enlargement will come to the Church some other way, but you may be destroyed who think to hold and keep your peace, either by saying or doing nothing; if ever you will appear, this is a day to appear in to do good. Let us be wise to manage and improve our day, so that it may never be said of us as our Lord did of Jerusalem, "If ye had known, even in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace!" *Caryl.*

Mordecai encourages Esther to estimate her position and lofty calling. "Who knoweth whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" God may have given thee the noble mission to save thy nation. He has invested thee with personal beauty; He has given thee the heart and the hand of Ahasuerus; He has made thy home a palace, and seated thee on a throne, not to gratify thy vanity and love of splendor; not for thy safety in the day of thy nation's peril, but as an angel of deliverance. Who knows but there is a proud destiny reserved for thee, to use thy elevation to lift up thy down-trodden people? *Brainerd.*—As if he had said, "Consider the wonderful and gracious providence of God, in raising thee from among a despised people to be the consort of the greatest monarch upon earth." Think not but the Lord therein certainly intended that some great work should be accomplished by thy hand

in favor of His afflicted Church. And now the hour is come for thee to make use of the advancement given thee by the Lord; and to try, by that power and interest which thou hast with the king, to reverse the decree of our adversary, and effect the deliverance of our whole nation. The argument used by Mordecai to Esther is one of general application and—viz., that one great purpose for which men are intrusted by Providence with power or riches is that they may therewith do good, and succor those who require their assistance; that they may help those to right who suffer wrong, may stand by their poorer brethren in the day of calamity and distress. *Bp. Sanderson.*

**16.** Mordecai hath said enough. These words have so put a new life into Esther that she is resolute to hazard the old: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish." Heroical thoughts do well befit great actions. Life can never be better adventured than where it shall be gain to lose it. *Bp. H.*

**Fast ye for me.** Fasting for another is fasting to obtain God's blessing on that other, and is naturally accompanied with earnest prayer to God for the person who is the object of the fast. Thus here again the *thought* of God underlies the narrative. P. C.—Here again the religious element shows itself. Esther's fast could have no object but to obtain God's favor and protection in the dangerous course on which she was about to enter. B. C.

Esther had not overlooked the importance of a general union of her people in religious exercise. She called into vitality and determined activity the whole combined and sympathetic force of multitudes, who at her instance did for three days put away from themselves every other thought, care, hope, that they might be found "watching" as regards the crisis of this hour. What an interesting suggestion arises from the words (verse 17), "So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him"! The tender ward has become the strong, firm, religious teacher of her guardian. P. C.

The soul of Esther was worthy of a daughter of Abraham and of Mordecai. It rose with danger and difficulty. To save the life of her nation, she at once determined to go over *the letter of a law*, over the custom of her sex, and to hazard her own life that her nation might not die. Her

bearing indicated deep piety as well as patriotism. *Brainerd*.—The fair young heroine's soul rose to the occasion, and responded with a swift determination to her older cousin's lofty words. Little as she says about her faith in God, it obviously underlay her courage. A soul that dares death in obedience to His will and in dependence on His aid demonstrates its godliness more forcibly in silence than by many professions. "If I perish, I perish." Think of the fair, soft lips set to utter that grand surrender, and of all the flowery and silken cords which bound the young heart to life so bright and desirable as was assured to her. Note the resolute calmness, the Spartan brevity, the clear sight of the possible fatal issue, the absolute submission. No higher strain has ever

come from human lips. This womanly soul was of the same stock as a Miriam, a Deborah, Jephthah's daughter; and the same fire burned in her—utter devotion to Israel because entire consecration to Israel's God. Religion and patriotism were to her inseparable. What was her individual life compared with her people's weal and her God's will? She was ready without a murmur to lay her young, radiant life down. Such ecstasy of willing self-sacrifice raises its subject above all fears and dissolves all hindrances. It may be wrought out in uneventful details of our small lives, and may illuminate these as truly as it sheds imperishable lustre over the lovely figure standing in the palace court, and waiting for life or death at the will of a sensual tyrant. A. M.

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## Section 68.

### ESTHER'S FIRST BANQUET. THE KING'S SLEEPLESS NIGHT AND READING OF THE RECORDS. MORDECAI HONORED.

ESTHER, CHAPS. 5, 6.

5 : 1 Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house : and the king sat upon  
 2 his royal throne in the royal house, over against the entrance of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his  
 3 sight : and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther  
 4 drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be given thee even to the half of the  
 5 kingdom. And Esther said, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this  
 6 day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him. Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that it may be done as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the  
 7 banquet that Esther had prepared. And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine,  
 8 What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee : and what is thy request? even to the half  
 9 of the kingdom it shall be performed. Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my  
 10 request is ; if I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant  
 11 my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I  
 12 shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said. Then went Haman  
 13 forth that day joyful and glad of heart : but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate,  
 14 that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was filled with wrath against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman refrained himself, and went home ; and he sent and fetched his friends and  
 15 Zeresh his wife. And Haman recounted unto them the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had  
 16 advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but  
 17 myself ; and to-morrow also am I invited by her together with the king. Yet all this availeth  
 18 me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and in the morning speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon : then go thou in

merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman ; and he caused the gallows to be made.

**6 : 1** On that night could not the king sleep ; and he commanded to bring the book of 2 records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, of those that 3 kept the door, who had sought to lay hands on the king Ahasuerus. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants 4 that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him. And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the 5 king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him. And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. 6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman said in his heart, To whom would the king 7 delight to do honour more than to myself? And Haman said unto the king, For the man 8 whom the king delighteth to honour, let royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and on the head of which a crown royal is set : 9 and let the apparel and the horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and cause him to ride on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall 10 it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour. Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai 11 the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate : let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and caused him to ride through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom 12 the king delighteth to honour. And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman 13 hastened to his house, mourning and having his head covered. And Haman recounted unto Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai, before whom thou hast begun to fall, be of the seed 14 of the Jews, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him. While they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

**5 : 1.** And now she walks into the inner court of the king, and puts herself into that forbidden presence, as if she said, "Here I am, with my life in my hand. If it please the king to take it, it is ready for him. Vashti, my predecessor, forfeited her place for not coming when she was called. Esther shall now hazard the forfeiture of her life for coming when she is not called. It is necessity, not disobedience, that hath put me upon this bold approach. According to thy construction, O king, I do either live or die ; either shall be welcome." *Bp. II.*

**2, 3.** Esther passed through the entrance into the pillared throne room, and across the wide room to the throne, and touched the top of the sceptre. What she did, she did right royally. I think the king became at once as proud of her courage as he was of her beauty. I think he felt a respect for her such as he had never felt before. He did not wait for her to speak, but addressed her as "Queen Esther," and promised that her request should be granted, to the half of his kingdom. W. J. B.

**4.** Ahasuerus at once showed favor to his

queen ; and surmising, as she drew near, that she had an important request to make, encouraged her to make it. She would not tell it in open court, but invited the king and Haman to a banquet in her own apartments. It was shrewdly done. Esther would re-establish her influence over her husband ; and she would throw the favorite off his guard, taking care, too, to have him present when she should unveil his malice, that he might not defeat or escape her. D. F.—The king understood that this invitation to a banquet, couched in the form of a request, was simply preliminary to some petition of greater importance. This was in accordance with Oriental usage.

**5.** She proposes a similar banquet on the morrow, with the promise that she will then make a full disclosure of that which she has upon her heart. Whence came that wisdom? We cannot well doubt, in the light of what immediately follows, that an unseen guide was leading her in a way that she knew not. *Street.*—Her intention in thus desiring to entertain the king twice at her banquets before she made known her petition to him was, that

she might thereby dispose him the better to grant the request which she had to make to him. *Prideaux*.—There was also a singular providence of God in so disposing her mind that the high honor which the king bestowed on Mordecai the next day might in the mean while fall out, and so make way for her petition; as also that Haman might in the mean while make his preparations for the execution of Mordecai. *Wells*.

**13.** This is the most brilliant day in the life of the favorite courtier. Rich in treasure, in sons, in honor, he is invited, not merely to-day, but to-morrow, to the table of the king and queen; perhaps from this some new distinction may proceed. "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the king's gate." The one bitter drop poisons the entire cup of sensual gratification, and the universally envied Haman is really the man most to be pitied in all Susa. *Van O*.

We are usually more alive to the good we want than to that which we possess; rendered delicate by indulgence rather than satiated by enjoyment, the slightest check in the career of our desires inflicts a wound which their gratification in every other particular is incapable of healing. Thus the wretched Haman, in the highest plenitude of affluence and power, exclaimed, *All this availeth me nothing, while Mordecai sits in the gate*. Such is the capricious fastidiousness of the human heart, chiefly in those who are most pampered by the gifts of fortune, that the person whom nothing has the power of gratifying long the merest trifle is sufficient to displease, and that he is often extremely chagrined and disquieted by the absence of that whose presence would scarcely be felt. *R. Hall*.

Those things which availed nothing to the happiness of Haman, under his vexation of spirit, are enumerated by him in his complaint uttered in the presence of his friends. They consist of the greatest distinctions and favors that he could desire from the king, and the most alluring objects of human wishes. Nevertheless his enjoyment of all this prosperity is alloyed by the single circumstance of Mordecai's disrespect, which was made a source of misery by his own passions and imagination. So it is that the proud, the revengeful, the discontented, the unthankful and impatient, are their own tormentors; whether God immediately execute His judgments on them or not, their own temper of mind is their punishment; on the other hand, the various natural passions and affections of the heart work together for

good, through the Divine grace, to those who govern them rightly. *J. Balguy*.

**14.** A gallows, in the ordinary sense, is scarcely intended, since hanging was not a Persian punishment. The intention, no doubt, was to crucify or impale Mordecai; and the pale or cross was to be seventy-five feet high, to make the punishment more conspicuous. *B. C*.

**6: 1-11.** Mordecai slept well that night, unconscious of danger; but the Lord, who kept Israel, slumbered not, and so ordered it in His providence that the rage of the heathen was disappointed of its prey. "On that night could not the king sleep." No doubt this had happened before, for sleep is far more secure and sweet to the laboring man than to the voluptuary; but it was of God that, on this critical night, when sleep fled, the king was disposed, not to vain amusement, but to reflection on the events of his reign. The chronicles of his kingdom were brought forth and read to him. In the roll of records read on that night to Ahasuerus, mention was made of the plot against his life, which Mordecai detected and defeated. On hearing it, conscience smote the king; nothing had been done for the preserver of his life; and the Jew had urged no claim, nor sought reward, but sat patiently in his place at the king's gate.

Ahasuerus, when roused, was full of will and energy. So soon as it was day he called, "Who is in the court?" Lo! Haman, greedy of revenge, had come already to crave the death of Mordecai. Before he could prefer his request, he was commanded by the king to lead Mordecai in a procession of honor through the city. What an effort Haman must have made to command himself, and to conceal the secret writhing he endured in doing such a service! Think how he must have felt, as the procession passed the gallows fifty cubits high.

Mordecai showed a sober mind. Not elated by the sudden mark of royal favor he had received, he returned quietly to his post at the gate. But he was confirmed, we may be sure, in faith that God would deliver His people, and he was encouraged to augur well for Esther's intervention. *D. F*.

**1. On that night.** The Hebrew makes the time very definite; that very night—*i. e.*, the night immediately following the day of the queen's banquet, and of Haman's conference with Zeresh and his friends just narrated. *The king's sleep fled*—this is literal; a bold figure! The king cannot command his own sleep. It was not an event that was in any way surprising or worthy of special notice, except as con-

nected in the chain of events. In this connection it was vital, and gave token of the ordering of the Divine hand. *Street.*

At the very juncture when Esther was gradually preparing for herself a favorable opportunity to plead the cause of her people, on the very night preceding the day upon which Haman, unable in the greatness of his anger longer to wait the full execution of his rapacious revenge, had determined to petition the king for Mordecai's destruction, on the night, too, of the very day in which he had prepared a gallows for this purpose—"on that night," recites the text, "could not the king sleep." B.

*A seemingly slight incident may involve great, momentous issues.* Often may sleep have gone from the king's eyes and nothing of consequence have followed. But that night was memorable, for that night's sleeplessness was the occasion of the salvation of Mordecai, and perhaps of Israel. In the providence of God, as though to rebuke men's self-confidence, little things are sent on high errands. It is a striking instance of Divine providence. He who "holds the king's heart in His hand," who can touch with the finger of His power the secret springs of thought and feeling, now sent troubled thoughts to this Persian king. That Lord of heaven, keeper of Israel, who slumbers not nor sleeps, was interposing on behalf of His chosen people. God willed that the sovereign should not slumber in order that he might thus be led to have "the book of records of the chronicles brought and read before the king," and Mordecai's services be thus brought to his royal notice. Little did Ahasuerus, as he tossed his restless head on the pillow, imagine that a Divine hand was laid on his troubled brain. As little do we know when the finger of God is working on us, with us, for us, or mercifully against us. P. C.

2. The wit of Zeresh had like to have gone beyond the wit of Esther. Had not the working providence of the Almighty contrived these events, beyond all hopes, all conceits, Mordecai had been dispatched, ere Esther's second banquet. To-morrow was the day pitched for both their designs. But God meant better things to His people; and fetches about all His holy purposes, after a wonderful fashion, in the very instant of opportunity. "He that keepeth Israel, and neither slumbereth nor sleepeth," causeth sleep that night to depart from him that had decreed to root out Israel. Great Ahasuerus, that commanded a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, cannot command a night's sleep. So he shall spend his restless

hours in the chronicles of his time. Among those voluminous registers of acts and monuments, which so many scores of provinces must needs yield, the book shall open upon Mordecai's discovery of the late treason of the two eunuchs; the reader is turned thither, by an insensible sway of Providence. Our most arbitrary or casual actions are overruled by a hand in heaven. *Bp. H.*

The Scriptures relate many events brought to pass by means which seem disproportionate, unsuitable and even contrary to the effect. Such events speak God to be their cause, His invisible power supplying the apparent defects in the means. Thus plots contrived in darkness, with all possible caution and secrecy, are by improbable means and unaccountable accidents disclosed and brought to light; "a bird of the air," as the wise man speaks, "telling the matter," or "the stone," according to the expression of the prophet, "crying out of the wall." In the Book of Esther we read: The king cannot sleep; to divert him, the chronicle is called for; Mordecai's service is there pitched upon, and inquiry made concerning his recompense; honor is decreed him; so the cruel device of Haman comes out, and he himself suffers. Whence can such events proceed but from the ever-watchful care of Him whose eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings? *Isaac Barrow.*

God's providence is a wonderful scheme; a web of many threads, woven with marvellous skill; a network composed of all kinds of materials, great and small, but so arranged that the very smallest of them is as essential as the largest to the completeness of the fabric. One would suppose that many of the dramas of the Old Testament were planned on very purpose to show how intimately things secular and things sacred, as we call them, are connected together; how entirely the minutest events are controlled by God, and at the same time how thoroughly the freedom of man is preserved. The meeting of two convicts in an Egyptian prison is a vital link in the chain of events that makes Joseph governor of Egypt; a young lady coming to bathe in the river preserves the life of Moses, and secures the escape of the Israelites; the thoughtful regard of a father for the comfort of his sons in the army brings David into contact with Goliath, and prepares the way for his elevation to the throne; the beauty of a Hebrew girl fascinating a Persian king saves the whole Hebrew race from massacre and extermination. W. G. B.

3. What honor hath been done to

**Mordecai for this?** It was a settled principle of the Persian government that "royal benefactors" were to receive an adequate reward. The names of such persons were placed on a special roll (Herod. viii. 85), and great care was taken that they should be properly recompensed. B. C.

**4. The king said, Who is in the court?** Probably some high officer of state was required to be always in attendance upon the monarch, to take his orders at any moment. **Now Haman was come.** Early morning is a common time for the transaction of business at an Eastern court. Haman was so anxious to get the business on which he was bent dispatched, that he had come perhaps even before daybreak, and was waiting in the outer court to get, if possible, the first audience. This haste of his to effect Mordecai's destruction led to his being the person deputed to do him the highest honor. P. C.

**10. Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate.** There is nothing strange in the king's knowing the nationality and position of Mordecai. His nationality would probably have been noted in the book of the chronicles. B. C.—**Do so to Mordecai.** Probably no more sudden or chilling reverse ever befell any mortal. Not only does his vision of the highest earthly glory to which he could aspire collapse at a breath, but his dream of revenge is gone; and worse than all, the magnificent demonstration which he had devised for himself all goes under his own superintendence to the honor of him whom he hated most of all men, and for whom he had been contriving a doom of shame and death. This sudden check to the flow of his spirits led him to imagine something deeper than the king intended.

**12. His head covered.** He went through the required demonstration, doubtless, as became a great minister of state upon whom a thousand eyes were turned. But when he had escaped from public gaze, he could command himself no longer. He felt that he must hide his telltale countenance from those he would meet, till he reached the asylum of sympathy which he would find in his home. *Street.*

**Came again to the gate.** A Haman would have been intoxicated by such an honor as was conferred on his enemy. To Mordecai the parade through the city was but an empty pageant, except in so far as it might contribute to his purpose of saving Israel. Hence we find him, after putting off the royal robes, returning to his post at the king's gate. The pass-

ing honors of the world make no change in those who are weighted with the pursuit of honors which the world cannot give. Their chief desire is to be at their post and do the work given them by a higher than an earthly master—"to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:8). It required no effort for Mordecai to descend from his momentary exaltation to his humble position as a palace servitor. His duty was in the king's gate. How blessed to be able to subordinate all merely personal or earthly things to the service of God! P. C.

**13. Hast begun to fall.** His counselors, and even his wife, have no prop for him in his adversity. Their words have the effect, rather, of an additional impulse downward. No less than three changes are rung by them on that word *fall*. "Thou hast begun to fall; falling, thou shalt fall before him"—so, when literally rendered. How different their language from that with which they cheered him on his way to the former banquet of the queen! *Street.*

After all necessary allowances and substitutions have been made, it may be very justly said that Shakespeare's Wolsey is essentially dwarfed by Scripture's Haman, and that not the finest of Shakespeare's five-act plays—wonderful products of human genius as they are—but must yield to the ten briefer chapters, with their five chief characters, of our Book of Esther. The book is indeed a consummate epic of the human heart. Its photographs are vivid and accurate, but they are not the facsimile of a countenance alone, but of things revealed and laid bare, in the fallen type of man, by the most skilful anatomy. What an extraordinary proclamation it makes, at one and the same time, of the vanity of human greatness and of the greatness of human vanity! How forcibly does it remind us of that Scripture that saith not in vain, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and *there* bids us hold our breath awhile! We can scarcely go on to say, "Who can know it?" for we find it manifestly set forth as known by One, at all events, whose finger guides us to the observation of it, and whose pencil limns it. Certainly the present passage lays bare such a heart to the core of it, and at the core it is bad. It is of an aggravated type. It reveals a miserable creature on his own showing, judged by his own standard, and at the confession of his own lips. We have no difficulty in understanding the description which Haman gives of himself. But the

difficulty would lie in crediting the phenomenon of any man, knowing his own symptoms so well, being ready to speak them so frankly, where they are what they are here.

In the larger, bolder, blacker portrait of Haman is there not some semblance of self, when, amid opportunities and advantages innumerable, comforts and joys innumerable, bright prospects and hopes innumerable, we put them all far from us just because *everything* conceivable is not to our mind. We are prone to share

the *perverse* nature of Haman when, as mere matter of fact, we overlook a thousand mercies we possess in favor of keenly noticing the absence of one withheld, like Eden's apple, or withdrawn after long enjoyment of it. We are prone to share the *unfruitful* nature of Haman. No fact has come to be better ascertained in human life than this, that it is not those who have most who give most. The greatest opportunity often witnesses the least improvement of it. *Barker.*

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## Section 69.

ESTHER'S PLEA FOR HER PEOPLE, AND CHARGE AGAINST HAMAN. HAMAN IMPALED AND MORDECAI ELEVATED. DECREE PERMITTING SELF-DEFENCE BY THE JEWS.

ESTHER, CHAPS. 7, 8.

7:1, 2 So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen. And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to 3 the half of the kingdom it shall be performed. Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my 4 life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: for we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my peace, although the adversary could not have compensated for 5 the king's damage. Then spake the king Ahasuerus and said unto Esther the queen, Who is 6 he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so? And Esther said, An adversary and an enemy, even this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the 7 queen. And the king arose in his wrath from the banquet of wine and went into the palace garden: and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw 8 that there was evil determined against him by the king. Then the king returned out of the palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the couch whereon Esther was. Then said the king, Will he even force the queen before me in the 9 house? As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Then said Harbonah, one of the chamberlains that were before the king, Behold, also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman hath made for Mordecai, who spake good for the king, standeth in 10 the house of Haman. And the king said, Hang him thereon. So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

8:1 On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he was 2 unto her. And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto 3 Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman. And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mis- 4 chief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews. Then the 5 king held out to Esther the golden sceptre. So Esther arose, and stood before the king. And she said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews 6 which are in all the king's provinces: for how can I endure to see the evil that shall come



7 unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred? Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand 8 upon the Jews. Write ye also to the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring : for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with 9 the king's ring, may no man reverse. Then were the king's scribes called at that time, in the third month, which is the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth *day* thereof ; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the satraps, and the governors and princes of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according 10 to their language. And he wrote in the name of king Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, riding on swift steeds that were used in 11 the king's service, bred of the stud : wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, *their* little 12 ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey, upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, *namely*, upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month 13 Adar. A copy of the writing, that the decree should be given out in every province, was published unto all the peoples, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge 14 themselves on their enemies. So the posts that rode upon swift steeds that were used in the king's service went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment ; and the 15 decree was given out in Shushan the palace. And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe 16 of fine linen and purple : and the city of Shushan shouted and was glad. The Jews had 17 light and gladness, and joy and honour. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had gladness and joy, a feast and a good day. And many from among the peoples of the land became Jews ; for the fear of the Jews was fallen upon them.

**7 : 3, 4. My life, and my people.** The queen's lips are unsealed now, and three glowing sentences will tell the whole. **Sold, destroy, kill, perish**—the very words of Haman's infamous decree ! **Compensate**—literally, "the enemy could not be even, or level with"—*i.e.*, up to the level of, the king's damage. Let the enemy exhaust all his resources, and the king would still be a loser. *Street.*

**4.** It was the proffer of ten thousand talents, wherewith Haman hoped both to purchase his intended revenge and the reputation of a worthy patriot. Well might Esther plead, "If we Jews deserved death, what needed our slaughter to be bought out? and if we deserved it not, what horrible cruelty was it to set a price upon innocent blood ! It is not any offence of ours ; it is only the despite of an enemy that hath wrought our destruction." *Bp. H.*—Esther adds that if it had been only a question of bondage, and of selling into such bondage of every man and woman of them, it was not her voice that should have been heard to deprecate, nor her lips that should have been parted in prayer to prevent it. But, she says, the case was one of greater, even of *supreme* extremity.

They were sold—to death. They were sold, in the words of the opportunely quoted "decree," "to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish." P. C.

It has been said that the whole book "breathes nothing but a spirit of pride and revenge"—"a very narrow-minded and Jewish spirit of revenge and persecution"—and that thus it is quite unworthy of a place in the canon. To us it seems that this is a gross misrepresentation. Esther, the heroine, is not a Judith, not even a Jael, but a timid, shrinking woman, forced into action by the danger of her near relative and of her nation. What can be more affecting than her words when first required to take an active part : "Go and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day ; I also and my maidens will fast likewise ; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law ; and if I perish, I perish !" Or what, again, more touching than her exclamation :

"Oh, how could I endure to see it—the evil which is coming on my people !  
Oh, how could I endure to see it—the destruction of my kindred !" (8 : 6.)

So far is she from being revengeful or perse-

cuting, that she declares, apparently from her heart, "If we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue" (7:4). G. R.

**5. Who is this?** The king is evidently aroused. The words of Esther have gone home to the mark. He throws out his pronouns in a wild confusion of excitement, and then repeats them with the order inverted. "Who is he, that one—and where is that one, he, whose heart has filled him (with the audacity) to do so?"—it is clear that the identification cannot wait. It must be prompt and unmistakable. And the queen is equal to the demand.

**6. The man, adversary.** The queen sees her advantage; and she speaks with all the vehemence of one who has deeply felt the monstrous injustice of Haman's plot. The collocation of the words in the Hebrew leaves no doubt that they were accompanied with a gesture of the hand; her scorn and righteous indignation flashed out as she pointed to him. "The man, adversary and enemy, is Haman, the wretch, this (one)." Well might he be terror-stricken in that presence. He reads, in the king's countenance and in his movements, the angry excitement that has taken possession of him. *Street.*

**8.** Haman, in the intensity of his supplication, had thrown himself upon the couch at Esther's feet. Of course the king did not believe his own words. But he meant to tax Haman with a further offence in not sufficiently respecting the person of the queen; and he thereby suggested to the attendants his instant execution. B. C.

**They covered Haman's face.** It was the custom so to cover the faces of condemned criminals, a custom also found among the ancient Romans, in that form of pronouncing sentence on a criminal ascribed by Cicero to Tarquinius Superbus: "Go, officer, bind his hands, veil his head, hang him on the fatal tree." This custom was noticed in Egypt by Dr. Pococke, who speaks of a man brought before the Bey, like a malefactor, with his hands behind him as if tied, and a napkin put over his head, as malefactors commonly have. *Parkhurst.*

**9. Hang him thereon.** Thus, within the compass of a day, Haman's fortune was completely reversed; but a few hours after he imagined his success most certain, this sentence of condemnation was pronounced upon him. *Bp. Andrewes.*

When iniquitous enterprises, managed by subtlety or violence, are suddenly and season-

ably defeated, then the ever-vigilant eye and the all-powerful hand are concerned. God beholdeth unjust men setting out in their designs; He letteth them proceed in full career till they are reaching the object of their wishes; then instantly He checketh, He turneth them back, He overthroweth them. Thus was Haman's plot confounded, when he had procured a royal decree, when he had fixed a time, when he had issued forth letters to destroy the people of God; thus declaring how vain is the presumption of the ungodly, how needful and how certain is His protection over His good and faithful servants; how much reason the one hath to dread Him, and the other to confide in Him. *Barrow.*

**10. On the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.** That same instrument, which he had reared on high for Mordecai's destruction, is appointed by Providence for his own; and his shame and punishment are rendered as conspicuous as his former honor and prosperity. *Balguy.*

In that deliverance of the Jews from Haman's conspiracy, there is no extraordinary manifestation of God's power; no particular cause or agent was in its working advanced above the ordinary pitch of nature; and yet the contrivance or suiting of these ordinary agents appointed by God is more admirable than if the same end had been effected by means truly miraculous. For a king not to take kindly rest by night, though in a bed of ease, is not unusual; for a king again to seek to solace his waking thoughts by hearing the annals of his kingdom is more commendable than rare; but that king Ahasuerus should lie awake at that time, specially when Haman did plot the destruction of Mordecai; that, causing the chronicles of his kingdom to be read, the reader should light on the place wherein was recorded Mordecai's unrewarded good service in discovering the treason intended against the king's person—this was from the keeper of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, and who was marvellous in His people's sight. *Jackson.*

*Sooner or later, successful sin will be overthrown.* We all "see the prosperity of the wicked," as the psalmist did, and, like him, we are grieved and troubled by it. But we must be like the patient patriarch, and wait to see "the end of the Lord." If we wait long enough we shall find that sin meets with its due award. The guilty empire founded in usurpation and bloodshed, and maintained by violence and corruption, goes down and goes out in ignominy

and disaster. The guilty adventurer rears his head for many years, but misfortune and misery overtake him in time. Haman goes to the gallows at last. The truth is, that sin carries in itself the seeds of its own discomfiture; these must germinate, and grow, and bear fruit in time. "I have seen the wicked in great power," etc.; but wait awhile, and "lo, he is not: he has passed away" (Ps. 37: 35).

*Sooner or later, persecuted righteousness will triumph.* Haman has gone to the gallows, and now Mordecai takes the chief chair of state. Let the godly man who is oppressed by iniquity bear his burden, and also his testimony; let him patiently pursue his course, looking *up* and looking *on*, and somewhere in the future the crown of a pure success awaits him—if not here, hereafter. "Weeping may endure for a night"—possibly a long night—but "joy comes in the morning." It may be the morrow of the distant future, but it will then be the beginning of a cloudless and endless day. P. C.

**3: 2. Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.** The "house of Haman" would include, not only the building and the furniture, but the household—the vast train of attendants of all kinds that was attached to the residence of a Persian noble. Esther, having received all this as a present from the king, placed her cousin in charge of it. B. C.—He whom Haman had plotted to destroy was now on the pinnacle of honor and power. "Man proposes, but God disposes." Haman passed away, and Mordecai sits in his place, and is clothed with power for the saving of the people whom their wicked adversary would annihilate.

**3.** *Continued, spoke, fell at his feet, wept, besought.* Here are five verbs describing the actions of Esther, and they disclose what a world of deep and mingled emotions had taken possession of her soul. They reveal also the nobler and heroic elements of character. Many a one that had undergone what had been laid on her would have ceased now that Haman's body hung on the gibbet and Mordecai was in the seat of power. But this courageous woman rested not until all the work was done. She carries her people on her heart, and is ever ready to face danger in their behalf. *Greene.*

**5. Reverse the letters devised by Haman.** To ask the king to unsay his own words was impossible. By representing the letters as devised by Haman, and written by Haman, Esther avoids doing so.

**6.** Esther's life was now safe, and probably her cousin's too. But that was not enough.

Her nation was still in danger. The royal decree had delivered the Jews throughout the empire into the hands of their enemies. In a few months, unless measures were meantime taken to check and hinder the malice of their foes, thousands of Israelites might be exposed to violence, pillage and massacre. The thought was to Esther cruel beyond bearing. "How," said she, "can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people, the destruction of my kindred?" This was patriotism indeed. P. C.

That which gives to the Book of Esther an enduring spiritual value is the noble, patriotic spirit of the Jewish race in the presence of the Gentiles among whom they sojourned, that passionate love of country and home, that generous pride in the independence of their race and creed, which kindled the song of Deborah, which continued to burn in the hearts of her countrymen and countrywomen after the lapse of a thousand years, and broke forth in the pathetic wail, in the courageous defiance, of the Jewish maiden, who, unseduced by the splendors, undaunted by the terror, of the Persian court, exclaimed, with the heroic determination, if need be, to sacrifice her life for her country, "If I perish, I perish! How can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people?" *Stanley.*—None but a truly heroic soul could have uttered such words as these, and with such effect. These speeches themselves afford an argument in favor of the genuineness and authenticity of this book. If they were uttered by Esther, and recorded by the scribes who wrote down all that fell from the lips of the king and those in his presence, and were engrossed in "the book of daily records," we may well expect to find in these extracts from that book a true reflection of the genius, the character and intellectual ability of this remarkable woman. Put these speeches beside those of any heathen woman of antiquity, and how they tower up in all that constitutes womanly nobility. *Greene.*

**8.** The Medo-Persians prided themselves on the unchangeableness of their laws and edicts. As Darius the Mede could not recede from his decree when he found that it menaced his favorite minister, Daniel; as Xerxes could not recall his word passed to Amestris, though it threatened to make a rebel of his brother; so Ahasuerus was (according to Persian notions) bound by his own act, and could not, without loss of his subjects' respect, annul the edict which he had allowed Haman to issue in his name, and sign with his signet. It was neces-

sary to have recourse to contrivance. The Jews' enemies must be allowed to set on them ; but the Jews might be permitted to defend themselves. That course had not been forbidden by the first edict ; it was expressly allowed by the second. And the governors of provinces might be told to favor the Jews, and, if need were, to take their part. In this way the triumph of the Jews would be secured without the king having to go from his word. G. R.

9. A new decree must issue at once giving the requisite permission, and copies must be at once distributed, that there might be no mistake or misunderstanding. So the "king's scribes" were summoned and set to work. P. C.

9. This is the longest verse in the Bible. The word rendered "scribe" occurs only in one other place (3:12) in this book. Among the Jews, the position of scribe was one of great importance. Among the Persians, the honor attaching to this term must have been even greater than among the Jews, because fewer of the people in proportion could wield the pen. "Ctesias informs us that the royal archives were written on parchment ; and there is abundant evidence that writing was an art perfectly familiar to the educated Persian" (*Rawlinson*). **To the satraps, pashas, and princes of the provinces.** The satraps were the rulers of the provinces, imperial magistrates representing the king in the provinces. Their authority was purely political and civil, the king making the military commanders always amenable to himself. The number of the satraps and the extent of their jurisdiction varied at different times. *Greene*.

10, 11. This state of apprehension lasted for somewhat more than two months. Then, a little before midsummer, the posts went once more speeding through the land, bearing a royal message. The former decree could not be directly countermanded ; and so, to defeat it, the Jews were allowed and encouraged to resist in arms any attack that might be made upon them by the native races among whom they dwelt, and assured of the neutrality—the benevolent neutrality—of the royal forces. At once there was a revulsion of feeling. The Jews were confident of their own strength, if they might freely use it, unhampered by the fear of being taxed with rebellion, and punished by the central authority for insurrection. So, everywhere, "in every province and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy

and gladness, a feast, and a good day" (verse 17). The sackcloth was put off ; the mourning came to an end ; feasting superseded fasting ; "joy and gladness" took the place of sorrow and apprehension. G. R.

14. **Being hastened.** Between Sivan, the third month (June), when the posts went out, and Adar, the twelfth month (March), when the struggle was to take place, the interval would be one of above eight months ; and two months would certainly have sufficed to carry the royal mandate to the remotest portions of the empire. Still, seeing how much depended on the mandate, and how necessary it was that the provincial governors should well comprehend the real wishes of the court in the matter (cf. chap. 9:3), we cannot be surprised that all haste was made. B. C.

15-17. *Mordecai's honor and the Jews' joy.* Ahasuerus was not content even now with what he had done for Mordecai. Before his minister quitted the presence, the king presented him with a crown of gold, and a robe and vest of honor ; and thus arrayed he proceeded into the city of Susa, where the new edict was already known, and had been received with satisfaction (verse 15). The Persians, who formed the predominant element in the population of the town, sympathized with the Jews, and rejoiced in the king's favor toward them ; while the Jews of Susa, having passed from despair to confident hope, were full of gladness and thankfulness. In the provinces the decree had a still warmer welcome. Its arrival was celebrated with a "feast" (verse 17) and "a good day." It led also to many of the heathen becoming proselytes to the Jewish religion—some perhaps from conviction, but others because they thought it safer to place themselves manifestly on the Jews' side before the day of the struggle. P. C.

17. One good effect of this deliverance was, that many of the people of the land that were considerate, sober and well inclined, became Jews, were proselyted to the Jewish religion, renounced idolatry, and worshipped the true God only. Haman thought to extirpate the Jews, but it proves, in the issue, that their numbers are greatly increased, and many added to the Church. H.—Persecution always defeats its own object. Viewed as mere policy, it is the worst that can be employed. Persecute error, and it will spread tenfold ; persecute truth, and it will spread a hundredfold. Unless, therefore, you wish the principles you hate to gain ground, persecute not at all. Haman, while he brought utter ruin upon himself

by his cruel attempt to exterminate the Jews, raised the latter into an incomparably better position than they occupied before. P. C.

The Jews who remained among the heathen were thus not only to be preserved, as well as those who returned home, but they and their religion were destined to come to honor; and so the future residence of the Jews who remained behind among the heathen would serve ever to diffuse more widely the knowledge and worship of the true God, and to prepare a larger number than that of the Jews only for the advent of Christ. This new favor toward the

Jews was adapted to promote the views of Ezra and Nehemiah (cf. Ezra 9 : 8, 9). C. G. B. —The dispersion of the Jews throughout the numerous provinces of the Babylonian and Persian empires became providentially the means of publishing the true religion among the people with whom they were intermixed. Being often eminently distinguished by the royal favor, they were enabled to convey a knowledge of the truth with greater advantage; the evident interpositions of God in the cause of His people also raising exalted sentiments of His religion. *Owen.*

## Section 70.

### THE JEWS' ASSAILANTS SMITTEN. FEAST OF PURIM. MORDECAI'S ADVANCEMENT.

ESTHER, CHAPS. 9, 10.

9 : 1 Now in the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have rule over them; whereas it was turned 2 to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them; the Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them 3 was fallen upon all the peoples. And all the princes of the provinces, and the satraps, and the governors, and they that did the king's business, helped the Jews; because the fear of 4 Mordecai was fallen upon them. For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went forth throughout all the provinces: for the man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. 5 And the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and with slaughter and 6 destruction, and did what they would unto them that hated them. And in Shushan the 7 palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, 8, 9 and Aspatha, and Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, and Parmashta, and Arisai, and 10 Aridai, and Vaizatha, the ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Jews' enemy. 11 slew they; but on the spoil they laid not their hand. On that day the number of those that 12 were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king. And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what then have they done in the rest of the king's provinces! Now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request 13 further? and it shall be done. Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to-morrow also according unto this day's decree, and 14 let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows. And the king commanded it so to be 15 done: and a decree was given out in Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons. And the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men in Shushan; but on the spoil they laid not 16 their hand. And the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of them that 17 hated them seventy and five thousand; but on the spoil they laid not their hand. *This was done* on the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same they 18 rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. But the Jews that were in Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day* thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the

19 fifteenth *day* of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness. Therefore do the Jews of the villages, that dwell in the unwalled towns, make the fourteenth day of the month Adar a *day of gladness and feasting*, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

20 And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the  
21 provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far, to enjoin them that they should keep  
22 the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly, as the days  
wherein the Jews had rest from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them  
from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning into a good day : that they should make them  
days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.  
23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them ;  
24 because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had de-  
vised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them,  
25 and to destroy them ; but when *the matter* came before the king, he commanded by letters  
that his wicked device, which he had devised against the Jews, should return upon his own  
26 head ; and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows. Wherefore they called  
these days Purim, after the name of Pur. Therefore because of all the words of this letter,  
and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and that which had come unto them,  
27 the Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined  
themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days accord-  
28 ing to the writing thereof, and according to the appointed time thereof, every year ; and  
that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family,  
every province, and every city ; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among  
29 the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed. Then Esther the queen, the  
daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority to confirm this second  
30 letter of Purim. And he sent letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven  
31 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth, to confirm these  
days of Purim in their appointed times, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen  
had enjoined them, and as they had ordained for themselves and for their seed, in the matter  
32 of the fastings and their cry. And the commandment of Esther confirmed these matters of  
Purim ; and it was written in the book.

**10 : 1** And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.  
2 And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the full account of the greatness of  
Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chron-  
3 icles of the kings of Media and Persia ? For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king  
Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren ; seek-  
ing the good of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

**9 : 3-16.** Mordecai's position at the capital being known, and his power evidently established, the Persian governors of all grades understood it to be their duty to throw their weight into the scale on behalf of the Jews, and lend them whatever help they could (verse 3). The Jews everywhere got the better of their adversaries. In "Shushan the palace," as it was called, or the upper town, of which the palace formed a part, they killed five hundred of them (verse 6). In the rest of the empire, if we accept the numbers of the present Hebrew text, as many as seventy-five thousand (verse 16). The Septuagint translators, however, who would have no reason for falsifying the text, give the number as fifteen thousand, which seems to be intrinsically more probable. They also, on the ensuing day, the 14th of Adar, by special permission of Ahasuerus, con-

tended with their adversaries in Shushan a second time, and slew on this occasion three hundred (verse 15). Among the killed, the only persons mentioned by name are ten sons of Haman, who were slain in "Shushan the palace" on the first day, while on the second day permission was given to expose their bodies on crosses (verse 14). P. C.

**5, 6.** The record shows (verse 2) that the Jews stood strictly on the defensive, that they made no attack on any, but simply repelled the assault of those who sought to destroy them. It also shows how furiously their enemies attacked them ; and that had self-defence been denied them, they would have been exterminated as a people.

**10. But on the spoil they laid not their hands.** According to the decree (8 : 11) the Jews were allowed "to take the spoil

of them for booty ;" but three times it is recorded (9 : 10, 15, 16) that "on the spoil they laid not their hands." They were allowed also "to destroy, to kill, and cause to perish little children and women," as well as "the force"—*i. e.*, the military force, of the people ; but the record expressly declares that they put to death only men (9 : 6, 12, 15). We can see how this would come out of the fact that the Jews stood on the defensive, and that only the armed force of the people—*i. e.*, the men, would be the assailants. We have no evidence that the Jews had any desire to destroy the women and children. It was the edict of the heathen king, the counterpart of his previous decree (3 : 13), which gave them the liberty. But they were the people of God, and as such morally far above their oppressors. The wives and children of the slain men needed the property all the more that the husband and father had been taken from them. It was not plunder that the Jews sought, but self-protection, the right to exist unmolested.

**12.** This verse is important as showing that the idea of further slaughter originated not with Esther, but rather with the king himself. He suggests here that something more is needed, and asks what it shall be. *Greene.*

**13.** It would seem that the Jews in Susa gathered themselves in the upper town on the appointed day, and were engaged there the whole day with their enemies. Esther asks that they may be allowed a second day to complete their work and free themselves from all danger of further persecution from their foes. She is not likely to have made this request unless prompted to make it by Mordecai, who must have had means of knowing how matters really stood, and, as the chief minister over the whole nation, is likely to have been actuated rather by general views of policy than by a blind spirit of revenge. P. C.

There was no thirst for blood in Esther's heart. Her whole character as delineated in this book is averse to this ; but she was made of stuff stern enough to demand further bloodshed if it were needed to stay the unrighteous blotting out of her people and God's church. This verse also shows that the right of self-defence was granted the Jews only as a special favor. There could be nothing wrong in asking that the privilege of self-defence might extend over all the days of the king's reign. It is what subjects in all Christian civilized society enjoy. As to impaling Haman's sons, that was intended to strike terror into the adversaries of the Jews. Nothing could have been better fitted to check the work of

slaughter. They had been slain ; now let them be hung up as a warning to all who had their spirit and were doing their fell work. These sons seem to have had the spirit and purpose of their father to "kill, destroy, and cause to perish" all the Jews. Doubtless Esther made this request at the prompting of Mordecai and such wise Jews as were in conference with him. *Greene.*

**14. They hanged Haman's ten sons.** A further instance of the retribution awaiting guilt. Haman had flattered his malicious and sanguinary spirit with the cruel hope of destroying the whole Jewish kindred ; now his own sons (of the number of whom he had before boasted) are all cut off, and on the gallows share the reproach of their father. *Bp. H.*

**16. Slew seventy and five thousand.** These persons were destroyed in consequence of their having obstinately persevered in measures of active hostility against the Jews, notwithstanding the change in the disposition of the king. *Hales.*—The people whom the Jews slaughtered were not, perhaps, in any case, Persians. The standing army of Persians which governed the empire was on the side of the Jews (Esth. 9 : 3) ; their enemies were the idolatrous people of the provinces, conquered races like themselves, for whom the Persians had little regard, and with whom they felt no sympathy. The number, seventy-five thousand, is uncertain, for it is replaced by fifteen thousand in the Septuagint version, and this latter figure is more in harmony with the eight hundred destroyed at Susa (verses 6, 15), than the larger number of the present Hebrew text. The "tameness, apathy and submission" objected to by the critics are imaginations of their own, founded merely on the *silence* of Scripture, which is always a weak ground, and here has no weight at all. It is the writer's object to set before us broadly the great danger of the Jews, their deliverance, and their triumph—not to give us all the details and minor features of the transactions. He does not tell us what the Jews would have done had the original design of Haman been carried out, or what their enemies did when the Jews set upon them. It is quite a gratuitous supposition that there was no fighting, and that none of the Jews perished. G. R.

There not only is no evidence of there having been any indiscriminate slaughter on the part of the Jews, but presumably none were slain except such as rose up to slay. Esther and Mordecai desired *one* thing—the safety of

their people. They wished for "rest from their enemies." They probably felt that they were the ministers of righteous retribution. They desired that Haman's ten sons "hanged on the gallows" should still drive home on an impressed populace the sense and conviction of what a force righteous retribution was, and how much men ought "to stand in awe" because of it; but there is no proof whatever that in all the relief to the bitterness of their soul revenge played any part. The lessons of this portion of the narrative are not needed for the pulpit on every Lord's day certainly, but it may be they are provided here, in the universality of the use of the Divine Book, for some special and solemn crises. *Barker.*

**17-32.** *Festival held, and feast of Purim instituted.* A natural instinct led the Jews, so soon as their triumph was accomplished, to indulge themselves in a day of rest and rejoicing (verse 17). The writer of the Book of Esther, practising his usual reticence, says nothing of the character of the "gladness;" but we can scarcely be wrong in believing it to have been in the main religious, and to have included gratitude to God for their deliverance, the ascription of praise to His name, and an outpouring of the heart before Him in earnest and prolonged thanksgiving. The circumstances of the struggle caused a difference, with regard to the date of the day of rejoicing, between the Jews of the capital and those of the provinces. The metropolitan Jews had two days of struggle, and could not "rest" until the third day, which was the 15th of Adar (verse 18); the provincial Jews began and ended their work in one day, the 13th, and so their thanksgiving-day was the 14th and not the 15th of the month (verse 17). The consequence was that it was wisely resolved to keep both days (verse 21). Nothing seems to have been determined as to the mode of keeping the feast, except that both days were to be "days of feasting and joy," and days upon which the richer members of the community should send "portions" and "gifts" to the poorer ones (verse 22). The name, "feast of Purim," was at once attached to the festival, in memory of Haman's consultation of the lot, the word "Pur" meaning "lot" in Persian (verse 24). The festival became a national institution by the general consent of the Jews everywhere (verse 27), and has remained to the present day among the most cherished of their usages. It falls in early spring, a month before the Passover, and occupies two days, which are still those fixed by Mordecai and Esther, the 14th and 15th of

Adar. The day preceding the feast is observed as a fast day, in commemoration of Esther's fast before going in uninvited to the king (chap. 4:16).

**20. Mordecai wrote these things.** Mordecai seems, in the first instance, to have written to the provincial Jews, suggesting to them the future observance of two days of Purim instead of one, and explaining the grounds of his proposition, but without venturing to issue any order. When he found his proposition well received (verses 23, 27), he sent out a second letter, "with all authority" (verse 29), enjoining the observance. P. C.

**22. And of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.** They made it a day both of thanksgiving and praise to God, and of feasting with one another; and they sent portions and gifts to their poorer neighbors, that they might partake in the festival. *Bp. Patrick.*—In like manner almsgiving and attention to the poor ought to make part of every Christian festival. *Bp. Andrewes.*

**25. Should return upon his own head.** When such men as Haman are not only supplanted in their wicked contrivances, but chastised for them, these occurrences do more than insinuate Divine wisdom to intervene, countermining and confounding such devices. For he it is who, as the Scripture telleth us, maketh the diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise; taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and turneth down the counsels of the froward headlong. *Barrow.*

**27.** We see in this verse a remarkable instance of national solidarity. The Jewish nation, in its present and prospective members, was one community. One life, one interest, one fate, has awaited that people wherever they have lived. In many respects the Jews are the most remarkable people that have ever lived upon the earth; and the cause of it, humanly speaking, is their national unity. The Jews in the time of Esther pledged themselves and their successors to a specific course of action. They did it not from selfish, worldly considerations, but out of regard to God and the interests of religion. Their children have accepted the action of their ancestors as their own, and faithfully complied with all its requisitions. Such a national unity as this cannot but be most powerful in moulding and shaping the character and destiny of a nation. The Jews, though they have been scattered to



the four winds and oppressed beyond measure, are still a mighty and unified people, their hearts throbbing with one life-current, and their wills subject to one Lord and King. National unity founded in religion finds a signal illustration in the Jews. *Greene.*

**28. That these days should be remembered.** Wherever Mordecai had sent to his people the messages of relief and the warrants to resist, there he now sends proposals which, if acceded to, will insure the perpetual memory of their deliverance, and will suggest ever new gratefulness for it. Esther joins heart and hand in the same, and the people themselves warmly approve the suggestion. They solemnly and enthusiastically adopt the proposal. They "undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written to them." The method of observing an anniversary to all generations is accepted as the means by which "the memorial" of their deliverance "shall never perish" from them or "their seed." It is evident that a deep religious interest was thrown into this matter, and the account of it is repeated as many as four times, and with minuteness of detail. The example is good for individuals. The precedent is good for nations. P. C.

It was usual with God's people in all ages to keep remarkable deliverances in perpetual remembrance. Most of the feasts that the Israelites had tended to this end, as the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles. For by memorials of mercy the memory of mercies is kept fresh; and men thereby are the more and oftener stirred up to praise God for them. Yea, by this means God's mercies, manifested in one age, are propagated to many ages; whereby many ages have matter of praising God ministered unto them, and of believing in God, and of hoping for deliverance in their distress. *Ainsworth.*

**That these days of Purim should not fall.** Josephus bears testimony to the observance of this festival in his time in the following words: "Hence, even now all the Jews that are in the habitable earth keep these days festival, and send presents to one another." It has also been regularly observed by the Jews to this day as an annual solemnity; and it forms a standing monument of the events recorded in this book. *Gray.*—The festival has been generally observed by a total rest from labor, by attendance in the synagogues, by sending presents to one another, by giving portions of food and gifts to the poor, and by great rejoicing and festivity. In the synagogue the

Book of Esther is solemnly read from beginning to end; all Jews, whether men, women, children, or servants, being required to attend, because they all had a share in the deliverance obtained by Esther. Before the reading begins three thanksgivings are briefly offered up; in the first they praise God for counting them worthy to attend this sacred solemnity; in the second, for His wonderful preservation of their forefathers; and in the third, for their having lived to keep another festival in memory of it. The history of Esther is always read on this occasion from a copy written on a roll of parchment, and never from a printed book, it bearing peculiarly the title of the Megillah, or roll of Esther. *Prideaur.*

**29. This second letter of Purim.** Mordecai's first letter (verse 20) was to some extent tentative, a recommendation. The Jews generally having accepted the recommendation (verses 23, 27), he and Esther now wrote a second letter, which was mandatory. The expression "this second letter" seems to imply that originally a copy of the letter followed. B. C.

**30. Words of peace and truth.** Words are of inestimable weight, for evil or for good. Human words move men mightily; and of Christ's words we know that they shall "never pass away." This description of the message which Mordecai and Esther sent to their countrymen throughout the empire is very significant. It consisted of words which, while they were words of truth, concealing nothing, declaring all, were yet words of peace, speaking peace unto Israel.

**Chap. 10. Conclusion:** *The greatness of Ahasuerus, and of Mordecai under him.* The Book of Esther might have been expected to terminate with the institution of the Purim feast. All that has gone before is subordinate to this, and the reader would be satisfied, and require no more, if the book stopped at the end of chap. 9. But the writer, perhaps from personal attachment to Mordecai, perhaps from mere patriotic pride in him, cannot lay down the pen until he has put on record the strength and support that he was to the Jews of his day. For the rest of Ahasuerus' "power and his might," the writer is content to refer his readers to "the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia" (verse 2), which contained also an account of "the greatness of Mordecai, whereto the king advanced him." This greatness forms the sole subject of the concluding verse, which declares Mordecai's position (1) with respect to the Persians—"next to the king;" and (2) with respect to the Jews—"great among them,"

“accepted,” and their protector and benefactor, “seeking their wealth,” or welfare, and “speaking peace,” or insuring tranquillity, to all the whole race or people. P. C.

Under all revolutions, the Jews of the Captivity had the comfort to see that some persons of their own body were surprisingly advanced into power and authority to patronize and defend their cause; which, as it showed the concern of the Almighty for the welfare of the Jews, must also have excited in their minds a regard for His honor and glory, and must have confirmed their dependence upon His great and precious promises. *Owen.*

**1. King Ahasuerus laid a tribute.** Some fresh arrangement of the tribute is likely to have followed on the return of Xerxes from Greece. His exchequer would be exhausted, and steps would have to be taken in order to replenish it. The expression in the original does not necessarily imply the first imposition of a tribute. **Upon the isles o the sea.** Cyprus, Aradus, the island Tyre, Platea, etc., remained in the hands of the Persians after the victories of the Greeks, and may be the “isles” here intended; or Xerxes may have ignored the loss of the Ægean Islands, and have “laid” his tribute upon them, though he might not be able to exact it.

**2. Power and might.** In the later years of Xerxes his “power and might” were chiefly shown in the erection of magnificent buildings, more especially at Persepolis. He abstained from military expeditions. **Kings of Media and Persia.** Media takes precedence of Persia (contrarily to chap. 1:3, 14, 18, etc.), because the kingdom of Media had preceded that of Persia, and in the “Book of the Chronicles” its history came first. B. C.

**2, 3.** In these verses is set forth the greatness of Xerxes for the purpose of showing to what an elevation Mordecai, as the head and representative of the Jewish nation, had been raised. The book opened with the almost total obscuration of God’s people; it closes with them as the brightest star in the galaxy of nations which composed this great kingdom. Thus the providence of God is the more manifest in caring for, delivering, and promoting them who trust and love Him. **Acceptable to the multitude of his brethren.** Mordecai was so manifestly raised up by God for the deliverance and promotion of his nation, that the Jews everywhere felt that they honored God in honoring His instrument. Gratitude also for what Mordecai had done in their behalf would incite them to respect

and affection. **Seeking good for his people.** Mordecai set a good example for all rulers. He did not seek *self* in honor or wealth; the good of the *people* was his aim. This is true patriotism. **Speaking peace to all.** Mordecai spoke words of cheer, hope, encouragement, and prosperity to his race. These are the closing words in the historical part of the Old Testament, and they seem to be a kind of prophecy of Him who was to come, bringing peace and salvation to all nations. *Greene.*

*The wealth and peace of a people the patriot’s aim.* It is a fine description of the aim of Mordecai’s public life with which this book closes. What more could be said of the patriotic statesman in any kingdom than this: that he was ever found “seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed”? Wealth includes not simply riches, but welfare in every sense: prosperity, security, progress, happiness—all that can truly enrich and bless a nation. He spoke peace to them. His acts had the effect of delivering them from the fear of their enemies. He held over them the shield of the king’s protection, and enabled them to live and work in quiet contentedness. It is reserved for the very last sentences of this book to give to one of the chiefest of its characters the place and testimony he had well earned. He has won for himself the name of the great and the good statesman. He is “next to Ahasuerus;” and what he did and what he was affected not the Jews only, but the whole empire—all of the various and wide dominion of the king. He is stamped on the sacred page as the type of a *beneficent statesman.*

#### *Religious Character and Aim of this Book.*

*God’s name is absent from the whole book, but God Himself is in every chapter.* There is no other book except Canticles in the sacred volume in which the Divine Being is neither mentioned nor obviously referred to. Yet no disbeliever in God could have written it; and no believer in God can read it without finding his faith strengthened thereby.

*A national festival is historically accounted for.* The feast of Purim was held in high honor, and observed with great regularity and solemnity and rejoicing among the Jews. “The temple may fail, but the Purim never,” was one of their proverbs. This Book of Esther was written to explain the origin of this national festival.

*A valuable moral lesson pervades the whole narrative.* Not only is the great general truth,

that earthly greatness and prosperity are mutable and transitory, brought effectively before us, but we learn that God humbles the proud and exalts the lowly who trust in Him.

*The providence of God is strikingly and memorably displayed.* We are brought into contact with the righteousness and the rule of the Most High. A great deliverance is wrought; and while the means are human, the deliverance itself is Divine. God appears as "mighty to save." The book is, accordingly, one peculiarly suitable to those in distress, perplexity, and trouble.

Its story is an illustration of the Divine providence. A complicated chain of events and actions is so governed as to work out the deliverance of the exiled Jews from a plot which aimed at their destruction; and this without any miracle or mention of Divine interposition. The fact is disclosed that the Jews, while in exile, under judgment, and without vision, were remembered and cared for by God. Outcast, they were not cast off; they were still the children of promise; God was still faithful to them. From this fact an inference may be drawn. There is a Divine providence in the world; no supernatural exercises of power are needed to enable God to effect His will; all laws and things are His creatures, and therefore under His control; human dramas and tragedies take place every day in which acutest plans are foiled, and, by seemingly natural processes, truth and right vindicated. P. C.

*Three aspects of God's providence strikingly illustrated.* 1. That God overrules the designs of the wicked for a larger blessing upon the good. This is an absolute and universal truth as respects nations and individuals. 2. The Divine providence operates equally in things little and great. To effect the final deliverance and larger liberty of God's oppressed people very many trivial occurrences were combined, each of which was indispensable to the ultimate result. 3. The agencies of Providence operate in response to the earnest and trustful prayers of God's people. "In every province was great mourning and fasting and weeping, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes." And a "three days' fast" before God was kept by the Jews in Shushan and by Esther with her maidens. And we know by sure inference that Jehovah wrought deliverance for His people in answer to their fervent supplications. B.

The Old Testament history here terminates. For the space of nearly five hundred years—

from the time of Nehemiah and Malachi to that of Paul—the Jews possessed no inspired writer; and their history, when recorded at all, was related in works which were not regarded by themselves as authoritative or canonical. All the evidence which we possess from profane sources of a really important and trustworthy character tends to confirm the truth of the history delivered to us in the sacred volume. The monumental records of past ages—Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, Phœnician—the writings of historians who have based their histories on contemporary annals, as Manetho, Berosus, Dius, Menander, Nicolas of Damascus—the descriptions given by eye-witnesses of the Oriental manners and customs—the proofs obtained by modern research of the condition of art in the time and country—all combine to confirm, illustrate, and establish the veracity of the writers, who have delivered to us, in the Pentateuch, in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah, the history of the chosen people. That history stands firm against all the assaults made upon it; and the more light that is thrown by research and discovery upon the times and countries with which it deals, the more apparent becomes its authentic and matter-of-fact character. Sound criticism finds in the sacred writings of the Jews documents belonging to the times of which they profess to treat, and on a calm investigation classes them, not with romantic poems or mythological fables, but with the sober narratives of those other ancient writers, who have sought to hand down to posterity a true account of the facts which their eyes have witnessed. As in the New Testament, so in the Old, that which the writers "declare" to the world is in the main "that which they have heard, which they have seen with their eyes, which they have looked upon, and which their hands have handled." It is not their object to amuse men, much less to impose on them by any "cunningly devised fables;" but simply to record facts and "bear their witness to the truth." G. R.

And now came the great change in the map of Palestine which distinguishes the geography of the New Testament from that of the Old. For the Jews, being in time restored to their own land by the Persians, did not attempt to resume the occupation of the country by tribes, although remnants of all the Twelve Tribes may have been found among them (2 Chron. 30:11); but, first resorting to Jerusalem in a mass, and then spreading themselves upon the

adjacent country, they afterward, in quest of further territory, passed round the central portion of the country possessed by the hated Samaritans, and settled the region to the north, between Gennesaret and the Mediterranean, hereafter known in history as Galilee. And, in the time of Christ, these were the three great divisions of the country—Judea on the south, Galilee on the north, and Samaria between. *N. C. Burt.*

## Section 71.

### FOUR SILENT CENTURIES BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS.

#### 1. Outline of the History.

##### *Introductory Statements.*

THE traditional space put in the binding of our Bibles between the Old and New Testaments is misleading as to the oneness of the whole Book. Matthew is as truly a continuation of Malachi as Malachi is of the foregoing prophets, from a number of whom he is separated by about the same interval of time that he is from Matthew. So "the Old and the New Testament Dispensations" is a misleading phrase, if taken to mean that blessings of an entirely different sort were dispensed under the "New" from those which were distributed under the "Old." The terms respect, not the matter of the dispensations, but the manner only, just as the same gold of the king's exchequer might be dealt out as either bullion, unrecognized save by a few as part of the royal treasure, or as coin of the realm, bearing clearly on its face the king's image and superscription, and offered freely to all. So Christianity is but the bullion of Judaism coined in the gospel mint, to be scattered broadcast over the earth, and made the universal currency of the world. *A. Ballard.*

The canon of the Old Testament closes with the prophecies of Malachi. A period, therefore, of about four hundred years separates the last book of the Old from the first of the New Testament Scriptures. This period is one of supreme importance in the history of the Jewish nation. During it the Jews were brought under the most varied influences. (1) First they were subject to the dominion of Persia; (2) for nearly a century and a half they were under Greek rulers; (3) for a century they enjoyed independence under their native Asmonæan princes; and (4) for more than half a century, while nominally ruled by the family of Herod,

they were in reality subject to the power of the great Roman empire.

In the course of this period a remarkable change was wrought in the condition of the elect nation. Whereas for many centuries they had been almost cut off from contact with the world around, they were now scattered everywhere, east and west, north and south, bearing about with them their peculiar customs and institutions, and diffusing wherever they went a knowledge of the law and the prophets. Corresponding to this wide diffusion of the people, which had so long "dwelt apart," there had been brought about also a change in their vernacular tongue and in their mode of worship. The language spoken in the days of David and Solomon was gradually exchanged for the Chaldee or "Syrian tongue," while the worship of the true God, before carried on only in the Temple at Jerusalem, was now celebrated, not only there on the occasion of the great festivals, but in synagogues, which arose out of the exigencies of the Captivity, and which were to be found, not only in every town, and almost in every village throughout Palestine, but also in every city in Syria, Asia Minor, Greece and Italy, where there was a Jewish settlement. Again, the intellectual culture of Greece had an important influence on Jewish development. It quickened independent thought, and led to the rise of various sects. "Freedom, ritualism and asceticism found a characteristic expression in *Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes*," while politicians, as represented by *Herodians*, looked to the family of Herod as a bulwark against Roman ambition, and pretended to trace in that dynasty the fulfilment of ancient prophecy. Lastly, the idea of the Messiah, which the "people of the future" had been raised up to foster and keep alive from

generation to generation, had been affected in no slight degree by the variety of the influences under which the Jews had been brought. As before, so now, each period added or connected something necessary to the completeness of the conception, and the sadness of the Captivity ended what the mournful close of Solomon's reign had begun. The "Son of David" gives place to the "Son of Man," and the idea of the conqueror and the king is combined with that of the lawgiver, the prophet and the priest. *G. F. Maclear.*

#### THE HISTORY OUTLINED.

##### *Palestine Under the Persians: to B.C. 333.*

A great historical chasm, about four hundred years in length, stretches between the close of the Old Testament history and the commencement of the New. During all that time there was neither prophet nor inspired writer of any kind among the Jews. Our knowledge of what took place among them is derived from the writings of Josephus, some of the books of the Apocrypha, and the notices of Greek and Latin historians. Though no further development of revealed religion took place during these four centuries, they constituted a very memorable period in general history. They witnessed the fall of the Persian empire, the rise and fall of the Macedonian, and the rise of the Roman. The seat of empire passed over from Asia to Europe; and the foundation was laid of those vast social changes which have so greatly raised the western and depressed the eastern and more ancient countries of the globe.

In sketching this long and important period, we shall follow the thread of Jewish history, glancing, right and left, as we proceed, at the leading nations that crowd the stage. The history of Palestine may be divided into six sections, corresponding to the different masters whose sway it owned.

1. The Persians were its nominal masters to the year B.C. 333.
2. Alexander the Great conquered it in that year, and was its master for ten years.
3. On his death (B.C. 323) it fell, after a long contest, under the Ptolemys, or Macedonian kings of Egypt; and so remained for more than a hundred years, to B.C. 204.
4. Then it came under the rule of the Macedonian kingdom of Syria, till it was set free by the Maccabees, B.C. 168.
5. It was ruled by the Maccabees for another century, till—
6. The Roman general Pompey conquered it

(B.C. 63), and made it tributary to the great mistress of the world.

For a considerable time after the days of Nehemiah the Persians continued masters of Judea; but during their rule nothing of much interest happened in Palestine. The country was annexed to the satrapy of Syria, but was allowed to be governed by the Jewish high-priests, acting under the Syrian satraps. The office of high-priest became a great object of ambition, and in consequence several disgraceful contests for it took place. Jeshua, a brother of Jonadab the high-priest, having endeavored to secure the honor for himself, was slain by Jonadab in the Temple. For this scandalous act, a heavy fine was imposed upon the Jews by the Persian governor.

Meanwhile, in Greece, the Peloponnesian war was brought to an end by the triumph of the Spartans and the humiliation and fall of Athens. Though partially restored afterward, Athens never again rose to its former influence and splendor. Artaxerxes Mnemon was now on the throne of Persia; and the early part of his reign was signalized by an attempt of his younger brother Cyrus to obtain the sceptre. Cyrus was defeated and slain near Babylon; and a body of ten thousand Greeks, who assisted him, had to make their retreat along the Tigris, and through the wilds of Armenia, until they reached the Black Sea. Of this celebrated retreat, an interesting account, well known to classical scholars, was written by Xenophon, the Greek historian, who conducted the expedition. It is interesting to observe, that the march of the ten thousand lay through the districts that formed the cradle of the human race, embracing, perhaps, the very land of Eden. War continued to rage between the Greeks and Persians for many years, till at length peace was concluded. But the power of the Spartans, which had predominated in Greece since the fall of Athens, was now destined to be overthrown. First at Leuctra, and again at Mantinea, they were defeated by the Thebans, under Epaminondas. The Theban supremacy was of short duration. At Cheronæa, Philip of Macedon overthrew the combined forces of the Thebans and Athenians, and made himself master of Greece. After this, Philip, having got himself appointed captain-general of all Greece, was preparing for a great war with Persia, when his life and his reign were cut short by his assassination. His son Alexander was only twenty when he succeeded him. The weapon with which the Persian empire was to be broken to pieces was now prepared. The

mighty he-goat, that had been seen two hundred years before in Daniel's vision on the banks of the Ulai, was advancing from the west to overturn the two-horned ram—the vast but now tottering Medo-Persian empire.

*Palestine Under Alexander : B.C. 333 to 323.*

It was B.C. 335 that Alexander began his memorable twelve years' reign. After quelling the attempts at rebellion in Macedonia, he entered Greece, and defeated the Thebans in decisive engagements. Passing over into Asia, he encountered and defeated the forces of Darius, in the memorable battles of Granicus in Mysia and Issus in Cilicia. Proceeding toward Egypt, which had long been in a troubled condition, he passed through Syria and Palestine. Tyre withstood him for several months, but at last fell, being reached by a remarkable mole which he constructed, between the ruins of the old city on the mainland and the modern one on the adjacent island. Alexander then marched to Jerusalem. There is a tradition that, as he approached the city, he was met by a procession of priests in their robes of office, and that the impression made on him was such that he spared the city and granted favorable terms to the Jews. It is quite likely that the priests showed him the prophecies of Daniel, which foretold his conquests; and this may be the explanation of the story, that when he saw the high-priest, he recognized in him the person who had told him in a dream that he should conquer the world. From Jerusalem he proceeded to Egypt, which he rapidly subdued; and while there he founded the city of Alexandria, which still bears his name.

Returning to Asia, Alexander encountered Darius in the plains of Assyria, and in the battle of Arbela, not far from the ancient Nineveh, gave its death-blow to the Persian empire, which had subsisted about two hundred years. Not content with the limits of that mighty domain, he pushed eastward into India; and had not his Macedonians positively refused to go farther, he would have penetrated far beyond the countries of the Indus. He was occupied with various new projects, when he was cut off at Babylon, by a fever brought on or aggravated by drinking to excess at a banquet. He died at the age of thirty-two, B.C. 323.

Alexander the Great appears to have formed a highly favorable estimate of the Jews, and to have discovered, in their intelligence, steadiness, industry and zeal, the elements that make good citizens everywhere. Accordingly, when he founded Alexandria in Egypt, he encouraged

the Jews to settle there, and gave them the privileges of citizens of the first class. He also encouraged them to settle in other newly founded cities, and generally throughout his empire. We have seen that, in the time of Esther, the Jews were widely scattered throughout the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of Persia. Now their dispersion, as well as their missionary influence, became still more extensive. In consequence of their distance from Jerusalem, the *sacrificial* part of their worship became less prominent, and the study of their sacred books occupied them more. Increased attention was thus given to the law and the prophets in the various countries of their dispersion; and, in consequence, the expectation of a coming Messiah was more and more widely diffused.

*Palestine Under the Ptolemys : B.C. (about) 324 to 204.*

On the death of Alexander, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Daniel, the great horn of the he-goat was broken; and for it came up four notable horns, "toward the four winds of heaven." His great empire was ultimately divided among four of his generals—Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Cassander and Seleucus. Egypt fell to Ptolemy, and by and by Palestine was added to his share. He is distinguished in history as Ptolemy Soter. At first he treated the Jews with severity, but he soon came to see, like Alexander, that their superior character fitted them for high offices, and sent thirty thousand of them to various parts of his dominions, including Cyrenia and Libya in Africa. Of the Jews who went to Egypt at this time, some are very honorably mentioned by Greek and other writers.

The successor of Soter was Ptolemy Philadelphus, one of the most eminent of the kings of Egypt of this period, and very friendly to the Jews. The reign of this prince was signalized by many remarkable events. He built the famous lighthouse of Pharos, near the mouth of the Nile, which was counted one of the wonders of the world. He founded the great library of Alexandria—a magnificent collection of the works of the writers of all nations. It was under his patronage that the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, according to the famous version of the Septuagint. This was one of the most important missionary works ever performed by man. The Hebrew Scriptures, and especially the Hebrew predictions of the coming Redeemer, might now be read wherever the Greek language was known. On the

coast of Palestine, Ptolemy built the famous seaport of Acca, or Ptolemais, now called Acre, or Acho. The Ptolemys, for the most part, were excellent rulers, and under them Egypt enjoyed no small share of prosperity.

The most distinguished man in Judea about this time was the high-priest, Simon the Just. His character is given in the apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus. He bore the highest reputation for wisdom, integrity and piety; but he seems to have had not a little of the spirit of a Pharisee. The Jews have a number of traditions about him, silly and unfounded in themselves, but showing the high estimation in which he was held. A short time after Simon, flourished Antigonus of Socho, president of the Sanhedrim; one of whose pupils, Sadoc, is thought by some to have been the founder of the sect of Sadducees. Antigonus is reported to have taught that men ought not to serve God from a servile regard to rewards, but out of love and reverence; from which Sadoc drew the unwarrantable inference that there were no rewards at all after this life, no resurrection, and no future state. These were prominent tenets of the Sadducees at a later period, but it is very doubtful whether the sect had so early an origin.

During this period the foundations were laid of the great monarchy of Syria, or Syro-Macedonia, of which Palestine was afterward to form a part. Seleucus, son of Antiochus, one of Alexander's generals, after various changes of fortune, ultimately acquired nearly the whole of Asia for his dominions. It was the fashion at the time to found new cities; and Seleucus, disregarding Damascus, Babylon, Susa and all the other ancient capitals, founded Seleucia and Antioch, making the one the eastern and the other the western capital of his kingdom. Seleucia was situated on the banks of the Euphrates, about forty miles distant from Babylon, which had now become a sort of enclosed park for wild beasts. Antioch was in Syria, on the banks of the Orontes, and was afterward famous as a centre and stronghold of Christianity. Like Alexander and Ptolemy, Seleucus encouraged the Jews to take up their residence in his new cities, and many accepted his invitation.

Much rivalry prevailed between the kings of Syria and those of Egypt, and the province of Palestine and Cœle-Syria formed a constant bone of contention. These kings are believed to be the persons designated in chap. 11 of Daniel, as the "kings of the north" and "south." The wars, alliances and other opera-

tions of these kings are prophetically described in that chapter with great minuteness. In the reigns of Ptolemy Philopator of Egypt and Antiochus the Great of Syria, the contest between the two powers came to a climax. In a pitched battle, fought at Raphia, near Gaza, Ptolemy conquered Antiochus. Visiting Jerusalem after the battle, he determined to enter the holy of holies in the Temple. The high-priest opposed him with all his might; but Ptolemy was not to be dissuaded from his purpose. It is said, however, that when he had got so far as the holy place, he was seized with such confusion and terror that he retreated in dismay. Afterward, on returning to Alexandria, he was so enraged at the Jews for having withstood him, that he deprived them of their privileges, and fined and persecuted them in the most scandalous manner. Among other wild proceedings, he brought to Alexandria all the Jews he could lay hands on from other parts of Egypt, shut them up in the hippodrome, intending to expose them for a spectacle to be destroyed by his elephants. The poor Jews ceased not to pray to the God of their fathers for deliverance. On the third day, when the king was present, and the elephants were brought forth and made drunk with wine mingled with frankincense, instead of falling upon the Jews, they turned their rage upon those who came to see the show, and destroyed great numbers of them! The king became alarmed at the evident tokens of God's favor for the Jews, and recalled all his persecuting edicts. At his death he was succeeded by Ptolemy Epiphanes, an infant of five. Antiochus took the opportunity to wrest the districts of Cœle-Syria and Palestine from Egypt; and from this time Palestine is to be regarded as subject to the kings of Syria. The era on which we now enter is a very dark one in Jewish history.

*Palestine Under the Macedonian Kings of Syria :  
B. C. 204 to 165.*

On the accession of the infant, Ptolemy Epiphanes, to the throne of Egypt, the Egyptians sent an embassy to Rome, craving the aid of the Romans against the encroachments of Antiochus. As the Roman people now began to take a prominent part in the affairs of the East, it is necessary to glance at their history during the preceding two centuries.

In the early part of this period the Romans made a very narrow escape from utter destruction, in consequence of an eruption of the Gauls. The Gauls, or Celts, were one of the great races that spread themselves over the

continent of Europe, but of whom scarcely anything is known up to the time of their coming into contact with the Romans. The Roman histories tell that after Rome was taken and burned by them, and its inhabitants butchered, the invaders were suddenly attacked by the dictator Camillus, and driven in one day beyond the confines of Rome. Recovering power and courage, the Romans now began a career of conquest in the peninsula of Italy. While this was going on, the Tarentines, one of their foes, sought the aid of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, one of the outlying states of Greece, on the opposite shores of the Adriatic Sea. This was the first occasion of Greece and Rome coming together. Pyrrhus was a man of great enterprise, and a very skilful general. He landed in Italy with thirty thousand men and a train of elephants. The Romans had never before faced or even seen elephants in battle, and were obliged to retire before Pyrrhus; but so great loss had been inflicted on the Greek army, that Pyrrhus uttered the memorable saying, "Another such victory, and we are undone!" He was glad of a pretext for leaving Italy.

Meanwhile, the Romans enlarged their sphere of conquest, and having quarrelled with the Carthaginians about the island of Sicily, measured their strength with that people in three successive Carthaginian wars. It was during the first Carthaginian war that the Romans equipped the first fleet they ever possessed. The campaign ended in their favor; the Carthaginians had to give up their possessions in Sicily. The aid of the Romans now began to be sought by the Greek states in their endless wars with each other; but till after the second Carthaginian war, the Roman armies did not move to the East. That campaign began very disastrously for the Romans; the victorious Hannibal seemed about to carry all before him. But it ended as much in favor of the Romans as it had begun in favor of the Carthaginians, the latter being wholly defeated just about the time when Palestine became part of the kingdom of Syria. Hannibal, hunted from refuge to refuge, at last ended his days by poison in Bithynia, in Asia. The third Carthaginian war ended about fifty years after, in the total destruction of Carthage. The military power of the Romans was thus thoroughly established, and the conquest of the world lay before them.

War—war—war is the unchanging burden of the history of those times. War in Greece, where Aratus, followed by Philopœmen, generals of the Achæan league, have been making desperate but ineffectual efforts to stir up the

old love of liberty, and set free their country; war in Macedonia, where the strong Roman legion is wrestling with what remains of valor in the Macedonian phalanx; war in Syria, war in Egypt—everywhere war; and yet all preparing the way for the establishment of the kingdom of the Prince of Peace!

In compliance with the request of the Egyptians, a Roman army was sent into Egypt to aid Ptolemy Epiphanes against Antiochus the Great. At first the Romans were unsuccessful, but ultimately they prevailed. Antiochus was compelled by the Romans to evacuate the whole country east of the Taurus, and pay the expenses of the war. He went eastward to raise the money; but having plundered a temple of Jupiter in the province of Elymais, he was murdered by the inhabitants. Thus ended the career of Antiochus the Great, B. C. 187.

Passing over his successor, Seleucus Philopator, in whose time little occurred in Judea of much interest, we arrive at a dark and troubled era—the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. Epiphanes—*i. e.*, the "Illustrious"—was illustrious only for the grossness of his character and the wickedness of his conduct. At his ascension, the high-priesthood at Jerusalem was in the hands of a worthy man, named Onias. But a brother of his having offered to pay Antiochus three hundred and sixty talents for the office, Onias was dispossessed, and the brother installed. Onias fled to Egypt, where he built a temple at Heliopolis, and acted as high-priest. The name of the usurper was Jesus; but not liking the Hebrew name, he changed it into the Greek name Jason. A Greek party now appears among the Jews. The sympathies of Jason were entirely with the Greeks; and to the utmost of his power he discountenanced the old Hebrew customs and religion. He even sent on one occasion an embassy to Tyre to take part in certain games in honor of the heathen god Hercules, and offer sacrifices on his altar. Jason, in his turn, was supplanted by another brother, who took the Greek name of Menelaus, and was still more of a Greek than Jason.

Antiochus now undertook an expedition into Egypt, and was successful. While he was there the Jews heard a report of his death, at which they showed signs of great joy. Hearing of this, Antiochus, on leaving Egypt, went to Jerusalem to chastise them. He besieged and took the sacred city; slew forty thousand Jews, and sold a like number as slaves; and, to show his contempt for the Jewish religion, entered the holy of holies, sacrificed a sow on



the altar of burnt offering, and sprinkled broth made from its flesh all over the building.

Not content with these atrocities, Antiochus began a furious persecution against the religion of the Jews. He issued an edict requiring all the people under his sceptre to worship the same gods. The Samaritans conformed to the decree, and allowed their temple on Mount Gerizim to be dedicated to the Grecian Jove. The Temple at Jerusalem was forcibly consecrated to the same heathen deity, and the statue of Jupiter Olympus was erected on the altar of burnt offering. To observe any of the Jewish customs was made a capital offence; in short, the most rigorous measures were adopted absolutely to root out the Jewish faith.

But enough remained of the noble Jewish spirit of other days to resist such blasphemous tyranny. There was a family of the priestly class, sometimes called the Asmonæans, from Asmonæus, one of their ancestors; and sometimes the Maccabees, a name, it is said, formed of the initial letters of the motto which one of them, Judas, placed on his standard, from Ex. 15: 11, "Who is like unto Thee among the gods, O Lord?" The Hebrew words are, MI CAMOKA BÆLIM JEHOVAH; and from the letters M C B I was derived the word Macabi, or Maccabee, which became the surname of the family, and was applied also to all who joined their cause. Mattathias, the father of the family, had five sons—Johanan, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan. They dwelt at Modin, a city to the west of Jerusalem, in the Philistine plain, near the sea-coast. When the emissaries of Antiochus came to Mattathias, urging him to conform to the pagan worship, he declared he should never prove unfaithful to his God; and seeing a Jew presenting himself at the heathen altar to sacrifice to the gods, he fell upon him, like Phinehas of old, and killed him on the spot. Collecting his family and other like-minded persons, he withdrew to the mountains of Judea, occupied the same caves and fastnesses which David had held nearly a thousand years before, and bade defiance to Antiochus and his armies. One body of his followers, to the number of a thousand, had taken refuge in a cave, where they were attacked on a Sabbath by a Syrian troop; and deeming it unlawful to resist on that day, every man, woman, and child were put to death. Hearing of this, Mattathias and his friends held a council, and after deliberation, came to the conclusion that resistance to such attacks on the Sabbath was lawful.

The number of the patriot army under the Maccabees gradually increased; their aged

leader, Mattathias, was removed by death, but his son Judas was eminently fitted to succeed him. The war of independence is a very interesting chapter of Jewish history, but our limits compel us to pass it over in a sentence. Three campaigns were undertaken by the Syro-Macedonians against the patriots. In all of these the Syrians were unsuccessful. One of them was undertaken by Antiochus in person. But the same loathsome disease which afterward cut off Herod attacked and destroyed him while breathing out threatening and slaughter against his foes. A civil war having broken out in Syria, peace was at last concluded. Judas Maccabæus became governor of Palestine, and though fresh troubles broke out speedily, a new era may be said to have begun.

*Palestine Under the Maccabees: B.C. 165 to 63.*

When Judas Maccabæus came into power, the Temple was purged and rededicated, and the ancient services resumed. But Judas was not allowed to prosecute his reforms in peace. He was again attacked by the Syrians; but, though successful once and again, he began to lose ground. He then applied to the Romans for help; but before it could be granted, he fell in battle. The command now devolved on his brother Jonathan. Owing, in a great measure, to the intrigues and plots that were going on for the Syrian throne, Jonathan contrived at last to get his authority acknowledged, and was declared meridarch or commander in Judea. But it was not long ere he was treacherously murdered. He was succeeded by his brother Simon, who, like Judas, appealed to the Romans, and, by studying their interests, obtained a large measure of power. The sovereignty was made hereditary in the family of Simon, and he was succeeded by his son, John Hyrcanus. The sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees were now keenly opposed to each other, and Hyrcanus joined first the one and then the other. Strife and commotion again prevailed. At last two rival Maccabees, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, grandsons of John Hyrcanus, contended for the dignity, and a civil war ensued in Judea. Meanwhile the Romans, under Pompey, had extended their victories into Syria, and Hyrcanus and Aristobulus both submitted their claims to Pompey's decision. Hyrcanus was preferred. Aristobulus attempted to defend Jerusalem against Pompey, but in vain. After a three months' siege, the city and Temple were taken, B.C. 63. Pompey impiously entered the holy of holies, thereby inflicting an unpardonable outrage on the feelings of the

Jews. It was remarked by them that after this his reverses of fortune began. He gave the government of Judea to Hyrcanus, but would not allow him to wear a crown. A yearly tribute to Rome was imposed. Aristobulus and some others were taken prisoners to Rome.

It would be impossible to narrate all the sieges, battles, murders and massacres that give their dark hue to this period of history. The effect on the state of religion among the Jews must have been very disastrous. Perhaps, however, religion suffered quite as much from the bitter contests between the Pharisees and the Sadducees as from any other cause. It is not certain that the Sadducees yet held all those impious doctrines which were afterward maintained by them. At first, their main characteristic was opposition to the traditions so strenuously upheld by the Pharisees. The Pharisees were generally the most numerous and powerful party. Now, as formerly, true piety probably flourished, like the ferns and mosses of our mountains, in shady nooks and lonely dells. Little of it can be discovered in the leaders of factions, or in any of the men who occupied prominent positions. The rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley must be sought for in more quiet and sequestered spots.

*Palestine Under the Romans : B.C. 63 to 4.*

When the Romans conquered Judea, they exacted a yearly tribute, but allowed the country to be still governed by the Maccabees, in conformity with its ancient laws and customs. But between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, the rival members of the Maccabee family, much strife and bloodshed arose. Hyrcanus was restored to the high-priesthood by Pompey, while Aristobulus, his brother, was carried to Rome to grace his triumph. But Aristobulus contrived to escape, and returned to renew the civil war in Judea. The contest was continued by his son Alexander, who was at last defeated with immense slaughter at Mount Tabor, in the plain of Esdraelon, the old battle-field of Palestine.

In the division of the Roman empire that had been made between the triumvirs, Cæsar, Pompey, and Crassus, Syria had been assigned to Crassus. But Crassus lost both his life and his reputation in a memorable defeat by the Parthians, near Carrhæ (Haran) in Mesopotamia—the place where Abraham sojourned after leaving Ur. The Parthians were now an important and formidable people. Formerly they constituted a province of the Persian empire, in the neighborhood of the Caspian ; but, B.C. 250,

they founded a kingdom of their own, under King Arsaces ; and while the Syrian kingdom was decaying, they overran several of the countries that had belonged to Persia and Macedonia, including many of those where the Jews were dispersed. Ultimately, they fell under the dominion of Rome.

After the death of Crassus, Syria was administered for a time by Cassius, an eminent Roman general ; but during the subsequent contest between Cæsar and Pompey, much disorder prevailed. Pompey having been killed in Egypt, Cæsar, now sole ruler of the empire, determined that Hyrcanus should rule as king at Jerusalem, and his family after him ; and appointed Antipater, an Idumæan by birth, who had made himself very useful to Cæsar, procurator of Judea under Hyrcanus. The two sons of Antipater, Phasaelus and Herod (afterward Herod the Great), were made governors of Judea and Galilee. Antipater did not enjoy his dignity long—he was poisoned the following year, B.C. 47. Three years after, his royal patron, Julius Cæsar, suffered a similar fate, being assassinated in the senate at Rome, B.C. 44.

In the subsequent division of empire between the new triumvirs, Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus, Syria and the East were given to Antony. For the most part, Antony was favorable to Herod, and his friendship aided him in the ambitious projects which he was now beginning to form. Phasaelus, elder brother of Herod, had died in prison by his own hand. About this time Herod married Mariamne, a granddaughter of Hyrcanus, of extraordinary beauty, thus securing the interest of one branch of the Maccabee family. But a new commotion was raised by Antigonus, a son of Aristobulus, who, gaining a temporary success, caused the ears of Hyrcanus to be cut off, that, being mutilated, he might be incapacitated for the office of the high-priesthood ; and pressed Herod so hard, that he had to retire to a fortress called Massada, on the Dead Sea. In this state of things Herod went to Rome, pictured to Antony the wretched disorders of Palestine, and getting him and the senate to believe that he alone could restore order, procured for himself the office and dignity of king. Antigonus was put to death ; and the rule of the Asmonæan princes came formally and forever to an end.

For some years Antony continued to be the head of the eastern portion of the empire. Every reader of history knows well the shameful profligacy to which he abandoned himself, in company with Cleopatra, the beautiful but

unprincipled queen of Egypt. In Egypt, at Antioch, at Jerusalem, and many other places, this outrage went on openly. We get a sad glimpse of the wretched state of morals in the Roman empire, when we see its highest men violating, as they did, the most sacred obligations of family life, living in open profligacy with the wives of other men, or going through the form of a divorce from their own, either to serve their convenience or gratify their lust by a new connection. At last a war broke out between Antony and Octavius, which was terminated by the battle of Actium, in Epirus, where Antony was completely defeated. About a year after, both he and Cleopatra committed suicide in Egypt, and the ancient kingdom of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemys sunk into a Roman province. Octavius, now known as Cæsar Augustus, became emperor of Rome.

Meanwhile Herod, crafty, clever, and cruel, was endeavoring to consolidate and extend his power in Judea. He was always in dread that some member of the Asmonæan family would start up to give him trouble, and coolly planned to get rid of as many of them as possible. One of his first victims was Aristobulus, a brother of his wife, a young man of remarkably fine appearance and manners, whom he had made high-priest; but as he became very popular among the Jews, Herod had him invited to his residence at Jericho, and induced him to bathe in a fish-pond, where, under pretence of sport, his head was held under the water by some of Herod's officers until he was choked. The aged Hyrcanus was the next to suffer. That unfortunate prince, after his ears were cut off, had been protected by the Parthians; but Herod prevailed on him to come to Jerusalem, where he trumped up a false charge against him, on pretext of which he put him to death, in his eightieth year. These barbarous murders of her nearest male relatives alienated his wife Mariamne. At last she too fell under suspicion, as if engaged in plotting against him; and though Herod loved her most passionately, she was executed by his orders. After her death he was seized with fearful remorse, and became almost distracted. His temper became far more cruel, suspicious, and vindictive than ever, and many new deeds of blood stained the annals of his reign.

The feeling of the Jews toward Herod—never very cordial, seeing that he was an Idumæan—was becoming more and more hostile; so that he found it necessary to take steps for securing a measure of their good-will. He set about effecting improvements in his kingdom. An

amphitheatre and a theatre were built by him at Jerusalem, for the amusement of the people. Samaria, which had lain a long time in ruins, was rebuilt, and named Sebaste, from Sebastos, the Greek word for Augustus. A magnificent palace was built for himself on Mount Zion. Another undertaking begun about this time was the building of a great seaport, between Joppa and Carmel—Cæsarea; afterward it became a place of great importance and the chief seat of government, when the Roman power was more firmly established in Palestine. It is remarkable that not one of all the many towns in Palestine that had been capitals was a seaport—not Hebron, nor Jerusalem, nor Gibeah, nor Shechem, nor Samaria, nor Tirzah, nor Jezreel, nor Mahanaim. The Jews had no love for the sea; in their view, it was the element of danger, and the emblem of strife and trouble; and in this light it is almost constantly presented in the imagery of the Bible, down to that vision of the Apocalypse where "there was no more sea."

But the chief of Herod's improvements was the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. This work was undertaken shortly after Augustus had given a decision in favor of Herod regarding certain violent complaints that had been made against him. Herod had signalized that decision by building a temple of white marble in honor of Augustus, at Paneas, beside the sources of the Jordan; and by this and other heathenish proceedings had created great dissatisfaction in the minds of the Jews. It was therefore a very seasonable undertaking to rebuild the national Temple at Jerusalem. It was now about five hundred years since the second Temple had been built; and the natural process of decay, as well as the damage which it had sustained during the many sieges and wars that had taken place in Jerusalem, made it exceedingly desirable that it should be renewed. The Jews were afraid that if Herod pulled down the existing Temple before he built the new, something might occur to prevent the erection, and their city might be deprived of its highest glory. It was accordingly arranged that all the materials for the new Temple should be prepared before the old building was demolished. A thousand wagons were employed in conveying stones and timber; ten thousand workmen in fitting the materials for building; and a thousand priests, skilled in architecture, in superintending the work. It was about ten years before the building was so far finished as to be ready for dedication and Divine service; but for many years after a

large body of men were employed about the outworks—justifying the remark of the Jews, “Forty and six years was this Temple in building.” Being regarded rather as a restoration than a new erection, it continued to be spoken of as the second Temple. By such important undertakings, and by the pains he took to embellish Jerusalem and improve the country generally, Herod did much to mitigate the detestation with which he otherwise would certainly have been regarded.

The domestic troubles and crimes of Herod were not yet ended. By his wife Mariamne he had two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, whom he intended to make his successors in the government. They were sent to Rome and introduced to Augustus, and seemed in a fair way of rising to honor and power. But the demon of suspicion haunted Herod, and he was surrounded by persons who were always trying, for their own interests, to persuade him that others were plotting for his life and his crown. At last his sons, like their mother, fell victims to his unnatural suspicion and brutal violence, and were strangled by his orders at Sebaste. Immense numbers of other persons were put to death at various times by his command, under the impression that they were engaged in conspiracies. On one occasion a large number of the Pharisees suffered this fate. These bloody and revolting deeds were perpetrated only a year or two before the birth of Jesus, and explain the suspicion which then filled Herod’s mind, and the wholesale massacre of the babes of Bethlehem, ordered by him with the purpose of getting rid of the unwelcome rival.

*The Jews of the Dispersion.*

We conclude this historical sketch with a glance at the state of the Jews in the chief countries of their dispersion up to the time of the birth of our Lord. In the countries to which they had been originally carried captive large numbers of Jews still remained, and in many of them they attained to great wealth and importance. In some of these countries they kept quite aloof from connection by marriage with the other inhabitants; but in other cases they were not so strict. This gave rise to various epithets, intended to mark the degree of purity of the Jewish blood. In the district between the Tigris and the Euphrates they were “healthy;” Media was “sickly;” Elymais, “in the last gasps;” and Mesene, “dead.” About the birth of our Lord, the Jews in Mesopotamia were exposed to a terrible persecution, in which above sixty thousand of them

were slain. In other districts of Asia severe persecution often befell them. In Arabia many Jews found a home; and for a long time the throne of Yemen or Seba, in Arabia, where the queen of Sheba had reigned, was filled by Jews. They even penetrated to China; according to tradition, a body of six thousand emigrated thither from Persia fifty or sixty years B.C. Some of the Hebrews attained even to the rank mandarins. The descendants of these Jews are still found in China, with a sanctuary constructed after the model of the Temple of Jerusalem. Egypt was long an important settlement of the Jews. At Heliopolis, where Joseph’s father-in-law had been priest, they had a temple, built by Onias, the high-priest who fled from Jerusalem in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes; and at Alexandria a synagogue, the magnificence of which was spoken of in the most glowing terms. In Cyrene, Libya, and other parts of Africa, their numbers were computed at about a million. Rome, too, had already begun to have its Jewish inhabitants. Under Pompey, Jews were sold in Rome as slaves. They soon, however, gained their liberty. Julius Cæsar patronized the Jews greatly; and Augustus showed them favor, encouraged no doubt by the attachment which Herod had shown to him. An age or two later, their troubles and miseries began to thicken in almost all parts of the world; but at the birth of our Lord they were not only very widely dispersed, but enjoyed no small share of comfort and prosperity.

LEADING EVENTS OF 400 YEARS.

AFFAIRS OF PALESTINE.

UNDER THE PERSIANS, TO B.C. 333.

*Kings of Persia.*

Artaxerxes Mnemon.....	B.C. 404–359
Ochus.....	358–337
Arogus.....	337–335
Darius....	335–331

UNDER ALEXANDER, B.C. 333–323.

UNDER THE PTOLEMYS, TO B.C. 204.

*Kings of Egypt.*

Ptolemy Soter... ..	B.C. 304–284
Ptolemy Philadelphus.....	285–247
Ptolemy Euergetes.....	247–222
Ptolemy Philopator.....	221–204

UNDER THE KINGS OF SYRIA, B.C. 204–165.

Antiochus the Great.....	B.C. 222–186
Seleucus Philopator... ..	186–175

Antiochus Epiphanes..... 175-164  
 Antiochus Eupator, etc..... 164-162

UNDER THE MACCABEES, B.C. 165-68.

Judas..... B.C. 165-160  
 Jonathan..... 160-148  
 Simon..... 148-135  
 John Hyrcanus..... 135-106  
 Aristobulus..... 106-105  
 Alexander Jannæus..... 105- 78  
 Alexander..... 78- 69  
 Aristobulus..... 69- 63  
 [Hyrcanus..... 63- 40  
 Antigonus..... 40- 37]

UNDER THE ROMANS, FROM B.C. 68.

Pompey—Crassus—Cassius.  
 Antipater—Herod.

AFFAIRS OF GREECE.

Fall of Athens—Rise of Thebes—Rise of Philip  
 of Macedon—Alexander the Great—Internal  
 Struggles—Greece Subdued by Romans.

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 AFFAIRS OF ROME.

Invasion of Gauls—War with Pyrrhus—Car-  
 thaginian Wars—Civil Wars—Conquests of  
 Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Palestine  
 —First Triumvirate: Julius Cæsar, Pompey,  
 Crassus—Second Triumvirate: Octavius, An-  
 tony, Lepidus—Cæsar Augustus, Emperor.  
*W. G. Blaikie.*

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## Section 72.

### THE FOUR CENTURIES BETWEEN THE TESTAMENTS.

#### 2. The Literature.

##### THE FOURTEEN APOCRYPHAL BOOKS.

THE canon of the Old Testament rests on the testimony of the Jewish synagogue. But this is not sufficient for Christians. We accept the Old Testament on the authority of Christ and the apostles, who endorsed Moses and the prophets as the organs of Divine revelation. We believe first in Christ, as our Lord and Saviour; next, the New Testament, as the authentic record of His teaching and example; and last, the Old Testament, as bearing witness of Him. The Roman Catholic Church accepts the canon of the Septuagint and the Vulgate, which include the so-called Apocrypha. She puts the Apocrypha on a par with the other books. The Greek Church assigns them a subordinate position. The Protestant churches accept only the Hebrew Scriptures as canonical, but they recognize the historical importance of the Apocrypha, which fill the gap between the Old and the New Testaments, and represent the history and religious life of the Jews during that period. Luther's Bible contains the Apocrypha, as "books which are not equal to the canonical Scriptures, yet useful and good to read." The Reformed churches drew a sharper distinction between apocryphal and canonical books, but

retained the former in the Swiss, French, Dutch, and English versions. The British and Foreign Bible Society and the American Bible Society excluded them from their editions since 1826. *Schaff.*

*Apocrypha* is a term popularly applied to the following fourteen books: 1 Esdras, 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Esther 10: 4 to chap. 16, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Song of the Three Holy Children, History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasses, 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees. These books represent the period of transition and decay after the return of the Jews from Babylon, and most (perhaps all) were probably written B.C. 300-30. We may notice in them (1) the absence of the prophetic element; (2) the almost total disappearance of the power shown in the poetry of the Old Testament; (3) the appearance of works of fiction resting, or purporting to rest, on an historical foundation; (4) the growth of a purely legendary literature; (5) the tendency to pass off supposititious books under the cover of illustrious names; (6) the insertion of unauthenticated formal documents as authentic; (7) abundant errors and anachronisms; (8) some peculiarities

connected with the religious and ethical development of Judaism, as the manifest influences of the struggle against idolatry under Antiochus, the growing hostility to the Samaritans, the prominence assigned in Tobit to almsgiving, with the growing belief in the individual guardianship of angels and the germs of a grotesque demonology there apparent, and (in Wisdom) the teachings in respect to wisdom, to the kingdom of God and its eternal blessings, and to the love and righteousness of God.

*Dic. B.*

The general spirit of the apocryphal books we may characterize as rationalistic. The Messianic prophecies are divested in great degree of their supernatural character; the Messiah is a man, of David's house, God's instrument in their national restoration, as David was in the establishment of the kingdom. But His place is subordinate. His work is of chief importance as preparatory to that of Jehovah, which is to follow. The Messianic kingdom is a part of the present world, and serves to introduce the world to come; the resurrection and judgment follow it, not precede it. Thus the Messiah's kingdom is only a reproduction of the Davidic in an enlarged and higher form.

*Andreeves.*

The apocryphal books were not only written after the end of the living progress of the Old Testament revelation, but their contents add nothing to our knowledge of that progress, and therefore we can say on broad grounds of common-sense that these books must not be included in the Bible record, but that their value is simply that of documents for the history of the connection of the Old and the New Testament.

*W. R. Smith.*

#### *Brief Notice of Each Book.*

**1 Esdras.** The greater part of this book reproduces what we find in the canonical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and was manifestly written by a Greek, probably by an Alexandrian Jew, who was acquainted with them. It gives, as was natural in a compiler from documents more or less fragmentary, a narrative intended to be more concise and more continuous of the return of the Jews down to the close of the Book of Ezra, whose name it presents in the Greek form of Esdras. But the writer thought it necessary to embellish history, and so he interpolates what is the original, and practically therefore the most interesting portion of the book, the narrative of the debate between the three young men that were of the body-guard of Darius as to the respective power of wine, of

women, and of truth. The advocate of truth is represented as being none other than the historical Zerubbabel, the prince of the house of David. It is through his eloquence that the king bids him ask what he will, and it should be given him. This was the secret history of the return from Babylon. Historically the book has but little value, is careless in its arrangements, and inconsistent with the Hebrew record. It has, however, left one legacy to the world which will not readily pass out of remembrance. When we hear in debates, religious or political, in the eloquence of statesmen or advocates, the familiar words, "Magna est veritas et prævallebit," we are listening to a quotation from the apocryphal book of 1 Esdras (4 : 41).

**2 Esdras.** The strange book which bears this title is marked by an entirely different character. It is distinctly and professedly an apocalypse. No Greek text of it is extant, though versions exist both in Arabic and Ethiopic as well as Latin. The entire absence of any reference to it in Philo or Josephus or the writers of the New Testament, as well as of any historical landmarks in the book itself, leaves the date of its composition open to conjecture. No critic worthy of the name has assigned an earlier date than the time of Julius Cæsar, or a later date than that of Domitian. And yet, wild and strange as are the contents of the book, no one can read it without profound interest. It gives us, as no other book does, a vivid picture of one phase of the Jewish mind, in the wild, unsettled period that preceded or followed the destruction of Jerusalem. There we find the first trace of the legend that was afterward accepted as to the dictation to Ezra of the existing Hebrew Bible, and of a large number of secret revelations in addition (14 : 38-48). There, too, for the first time, we find the marvellous tale, the parent of so many yet more marvellous theories, how the Ten Tribes in the land of their exile resolved that they would go to a far-off country, "and keep there the statutes which they never kept in their own land" (13 : 40-46).

**Tobit.** Of this book we have, besides the Septuagint and the Latin version, two Hebrew texts. There is no reason, however, to think that it was originally written in Hebrew. And we know, both from Origen and Athanasius, that the Jews of their time did not recognize it as belonging to the canon. The existence of Hebrew translations is, however, interesting, as showing the popularity of the book, not only among Christians, to whom it came commended by its position in the Greek version of

the Old Testament, but among Jews, who accepted it on its ethical and literary merits. Of these we need not hesitate to speak very highly. While to some extent reminding us of the Book of Ruth as being a domestic history, it is for us interesting as being one among the earliest examples of ethical fiction. Reverence for parents (4 : 3), the duty and the blessing of almsgiving (1 : 16, 17 ; 4 : 16 ; 14 : 11), purity and temperance (4 : 15), the holiness of marriage (8 : 7)—these are the leading lessons of the book ; and though the story with which it is interwoven has for us a superstitious and almost ludicrous aspect, it has yet in parts a singular tenderness and beauty. The book, it must be added, has no claim to the character of history. The developed belief as to possession by evil spirits, the practice of exorcism, the names Asmodeus and Raphael, indicate a date subsequent to the Babylonian Captivity ; and the personation of autobiography in chaps. 1-3 is but the well-known artifice which has been held legitimate by all writers of fiction.

*Judith.* Here, too, we are on the ground of historical fiction, and not of history ; and the writer betrays himself by more serious anachronisms than those which we have found in Tobit. Nebuchadnezzar (= Nabuchodonosor) is made king of Nineveh, not of Babylon, at a time after the destruction of the former city ; is called the king of the Assyrians, instead of the Chaldeans, as in the historical books of the Old Testament. The Israelites are represented as having returned from the Captivity and rebuilt their temple in the time of the very king who had destroyed the Temple and carried them into exile (4 : 3 ; 5 : 18, 19). Jerome speaks of it as written in the Chaldee language, and as read among the Hebrews. Josephus, singularly enough, does not even allude to it.

*The rest of the chapters of the Book of Esther, which are found neither in the Hebrew nor in the Chaldee.* I have quoted the title of this fragment, as showing with sufficient clearness the grounds on which it was placed among the Apocrypha. In this instance, as in 1 Esdras, a canonical book was thought not sufficiently interesting, and was embellished with additions by the Greek translator. The writer indicates his own time with sufficient clearness by reference to "the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra" (11 : 1). The additions are, it may be added, absolutely worthless.

*The Wisdom of Solomon.* The book which bears this name is in many respects the gem of the whole Apocrypha. Here again we know

nothing of the writer, and can but roughly approximate to the date of the book. There is no trace of a Hebrew original, and it was never received by the Jews of Palestine. Our first actual knowledge of it comes from Christian sources, and this does not carry us further back than the latter part of the second century. The book is, however, clearly pre-Christian. There is no reference in it to the facts of the Gospel history, nor to its leading thoughts. The writer was an Alexandrian Jew, who, like Philo, had come in contact with the language and thoughts of Platonists, Stoics, Epicureans, and had sought, as Philo, without giving up the faith of his fathers, to show that it was in harmony with all that was truest and noblest in the philosophy of Greece. By many writers indeed, from Jerome onward, Philo has been regarded as the author, but of this there is no proof. We can scarcely resist the impression that the book is but the fragment of what was intended to have been a far larger work. It ends abruptly ; its survey of the history of Israel being altogether incomplete, and with hardly even the semblance of the rhetorical peroration which the general character of the book would have led us to expect.

*The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus.* In this instance we have what we find in no other canonical or apocryphal book—an editorial preface, purporting to give something like a history of its origin. It represents it as the result of the labors of three generations. The elder Jesus, or Joshua, lived "almost after all the prophets," a phrase which seems to indicate a date between Zechariah and Malachi. What the exceptional loftiness of the eighth chapter of Proverbs was at a later time to the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon, that the prudential morality of the rest of the book was to him. He became a collector of "the grave and short sentences of wise men," and added "some of his own." He bequeathed this collection to his son Sirach, who, in his turn, left it to a younger Jesus, named after his grandfather. To him belonged the work of arranging and editing, and if we accept the second prologue as genuine, we arrive at something like a definite statement as to the origin of the book which he thus edits. It was originally in Hebrew—i.e., the Aramaic of Jerusalem after the return from the Exile. He had come into Egypt when Euergetes was king, in the thirty-eighth year from some era to us undefined—probably, i.e., about B.C. 133—and thought it his duty to translate it for the benefit of those of his countrymen who, being settled in "a

strange country," were yet "willing to learn, being prepared before in manners to live after the law." The later chapters of this book give us distinct internal evidence of date in harmony with the conclusion thus arrived at. Significant both as to the date of the book, its Hebrew or Palestine origin, and the growing antipathy which it indicates, is the passage in which the writer enumerates, among those whom his soul abhorreth, those "that sit upon the mountain of Samaria, and they that dwell among the Philistines, and that foolish people that dwell in Sichem" (50:26). This could hardly have been written before the rivalry between Gerizim and Jerusalem had become a definitely pronounced fact, and it stands among the earliest tokens of the antagonism which afterward rose to such a height that the Jews had "no dealings with the Samaritans." The title of Ecclesiasticus, it may be noted, is of Latin, not Greek origin as applied to the book. In the Septuagint, and as quoted by the Greek fathers, it is always as the Wisdom of Sirach, sometimes the All-excellent Wisdom. When given to this book it was in the sense in which the whole body of the Apocrypha was sometimes called ecclesiastical—*i.e.*, fit for being used in church, the pre-eminent popularity of the book, and possibly its general use for the ethical instruction of catechumens, winning for it the special application of the more general name. The fact that one of the sapiential books of the Old Testament had already received the title Ecclesiastes in a different sense, might contribute to the currency of the name as applied to a book which seemed to the superficial reader to belong to the same class.

*Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremy.* Here also we have a book purporting to come from one who was prominent in the history of Israel, the secretary and companion of a prophet (Jer. 32:12; 36:4-10). There are no traces, however, of any Hebrew original, and the book has never been acknowledged as genuine either by the Jews themselves or by those who were brought into contact, as Jerome was, with the Jewish canon. There is not the slightest reference to it in the New Testament or in the early fathers. It must therefore be regarded as simply a compilation put together to meet the demands of Alexandrian Jews for additions to their religious literature, or to meet their religious dangers with edifying counsels. Its chief characteristic, in which it stands alone among the Apocrypha, is that it is manifestly modelled chiefly upon the writings of the prophetic books of the Old Testament; and al-

though the true prophet is not there, we at least hear echoes of the lofty imagery with which the older seers had set forth the future glories of Israel (4:30; 5:9). Like all the Alexandrian books, however, the note of the love of heavenly wisdom is not absent from it, and in 3:12-37 we have distinct traces of the influence of such passages as Job 28. Noticeable also is the prominence given to "the Everlasting" as the equivalent for the Hebrew Jehovah, instead of the more common "Lord" of the New Testament writers. Most readers will, it is believed, feel that it would be a gain to the majesty of our version if that or "the Eternal" had been adopted in like manner there, as it is in the French and some other versions.

*The Epistle of Jeremy*, annexed to Baruch, stands on just the same footing. As a composition it is every way inferior to it, and is not in any sense an imitation of the style of the prophet from whom it purports to come. It is, indeed, simply a long diatribe, partly modelled upon Isa. 46, against the folly of idolatry, and almost the only fact of interest in it is the incidental notice of the special forms of impurity connected with the Babylonian worship of Mylitta (verse 43), as that worship is described by Herodotus.

*The Song of the Three Holy Children, the History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon.* The three fragments that bear these titles appear in the Septuagint version of the Book of Daniel. The character of that book, as partly narrative, partly apocalyptic (perhaps also its position among the Hagiographa, and not among the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures), tempted the translator to embellish the book with narratives which may very probably have been based upon traditions already current, and to interweave a prayer and a psalm (both irrelevant and inappropriate, and scarcely rising above the level of rhetoric) into the narrative of the heroic confession, the martyrdom in will and deed, though not in result, of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. As incorporated with the text of Daniel in the Greek version, all portions were received by the early Christians with the same reverence, and passed in the same way into the Latin version. The Song of the Three Children was accepted in the fourth century as a hymn of the Christian Church, in the first instance by the Church of Spain, at the fourth Council of Toledo (Can. 14), and still retains its place in the Prayer-Book of the Church of England. The history of Susanna has probably become more conspicuous as having furnished painters with a biblical subject which admitted of a



sensuous treatment, than as supplying preachers with a theme for homiletic instruction. Some of the early fathers, however, ventured upon an allegorical interpretation, and Susanna appeared as a type of the Christian Church suffering under calumny and persecution. The narrative of Bel and the Dragon is chiefly noticeable in connection with the history of the English Prayer-Book. Of all the apocryphal lessons, it was the one which the Puritan party most strongly objected to, and in deference to their feelings it was struck out of the Table of Lessons by the Hampton Court Conference under James I. When the Restoration came, the bishops and divines who revised the Prayer-Book thought fit to restore it. Happily it has disappeared with a good deal besides of apocryphal lumber in the last revision of 1870.

*The Prayer of Manasse.* The narrative of the repentance of Manasseh, and of his return from Babylon and restoration to his kingdom (2 Chron. 33 : 12, 13), and the fact that a Hebrew prayer attributed to him was extant at the time when the Books of Chronicles were compiled (2 Chron. 33 : 18), were naturally suggestive to the class of writers who undertook the task of filling up gaps or adorning the narratives of the Hebrew Bible. There is no reference to it or trace of its existence before A.D. 221; but its moral teaching and rhetorical power commended it for devotional use among Christians, and it is found in the great Alexandrian ms. of the Old Testament, not as part of the volume, but among the hymns and rhythmical prayers which are appended to the Psalter. The interest attaching to its supposed history has given it a prominence which it would hardly have attained otherwise.

*1 and 2 Maccabees.* The way in which these books are presented to us in the Apocrypha is to a certain extent misleading. Our first impression is that, as with 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, in the Old Testament, so here, that which is brought before us is a consecutive history. A very slight inspection serves to show that instead of this we have two entirely independent narratives, and that the second starts from an earlier period than the first, the events included in the one being from B.C. 180-161, in the other from B.C. 168-135. Each book has therefore to be dealt with separately. It is worth while noting that the two that we have are only a portion of a copious literature dealing with the great struggle of the Jews, headed in the first instance by Mattathias the Just, and afterward by Judas the Maccabee, his more famous son, against the attempt by

Antiochus Epiphanes to destroy their faith and crush out their national life. A third Book of Maccabees found a place in the Septuagint canon of Scripture, giving an account (as if an inverted order had seemed natural to the compiler) of events which preceded those recorded in the second. A fourth book, running parallel with the second, is extant in Greek, and was ascribed conjecturally to the authorship of Josephus. A fifth is extant, giving a summary of Jewish history from the attempt of Heliodorus (2 Macc. 3) to the time of our Lord. There are traces even of a sixth. The two which are now printed in the English Apocrypha owe their position to the fact that they were included in the Latin Vulgate. Jerome, it is true, though he says that he found the first book in Hebrew, did not translate them, and the Vulgate version is from the older Latin translation of the Old Testament that was current before Jerome's work. The Council of Trent formally adopted them as part of the canon of Scripture. The reformed churches dealt with them as with the other books of the Apocrypha, but, unlike most of the others, they have never taken their place in the public reading of Scripture authorized by the Church of England.

*1 Maccabees.* The book appears, from Jerome's statement and from internal evidence, to have been written originally in Hebrew, but was probably soon translated for the use of the Alexandrian Jews. For the most part it tells its tale with a fairly sustained dignity, without exaggeration, and few can read the narrative of the heroic resistance of Mattathias and his sons to the insane tyranny of Antiochus (chaps. 1 and 2) without feeling their hearts glow within them. There is no intermixture of matter clearly legendary, as in the second book, and the narrative seems to have been based, as it professes to be, on "the chronicles of the priesthood" (16 : 24). If we feel distrust anywhere, it is where the writer professes to give actual copies of the official documents that had passed in the negotiations between the Maccabæan chiefs on the one side, and the Romans and Lacedæmonians. It is probable enough that some such negotiations were carried on, and chap. 8 cannot fail to be read with interest, as recording the first direct contact between the great world-power of the West and the race of Abraham, and giving the impressions made upon the mind of the Jews by the power and simplicity of the Roman government, in which "none wore a crown or was clothed with purple to be magnified thereby" (8 : 14); but the

style of the letter purporting to come from the Roman senate is not that of the official documents of the republic, and we can hardly believe that, even in the degenerate days which had then fallen upon Sparta, the Lacedæmonians would distinctly admit that they and the Jews were brethren, and that both had come out of the stock of Abraham (12 : 21).

2 *Maccabees*. We come here upon a book of a very different and inferior stamp. The writer professes to base his narrative upon a larger work by Jason of Cyrene, in five books (2 : 23)—an indication, we may note in passing, that the Jews had already found their way to Western Africa. As Cyrene, like Alexandria, was distinctly a Greek colony, it was probable, in the nature of the case, that both the original work and the epitome were written in that language. The real beginning of the narrative does not meet us till chap. 2 : 19, and the actual opening of the book takes the form of an encyclical letter from the Jews at Jerusalem to their brethren in Egypt. The letter bears every mark of being spurious, and gives in a strangely incoherent way a series of legends as to the death of Antiochus Epiphanes (1 : 1-16), the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles by Nehemiah, and the miraculous appearance of a flame after he had poured water on the stones of the altar (1 : 20-36). It then goes back to a remoter past, and tells how Jeremiah had ascended "the mountain where Moses climbed up and saw the heritage of God," carrying (!) the tabernacle (!), the ark, and the altar of incense, and hid them in the cave (2 : 1-8); then turns to the dedication of the Temple, and Solomon, and the formation of a sacred library by Nehemiah (2 : 9-14). All this is brought before us with a strange incoherence and confusion; then follows the notice of Jason of Cyrene; and in chap. 3 we enter on the real narrative. In part, as has been seen, it covers the same ground as the first book. Its narrative is, however, more highly colored. The story of martyrdoms, as in the cases of Eleazar and the seven brothers (chaps. 6, 7), is related with more circumstantial fulness. Heliodorus, in his outrage on the Temple, sees a vision of a "horse with a terrible rider," is smitten for a time with blindness, and then repents and offers sacrifice (8 : 24-35). Horsemen are seen in the air, in cloth of gold, and armed with lances, over the streets of Jerusalem (5 : 1, 2). Antiochus is smitten of God, and eaten with worms (9 : 1-12); and he too repents, and makes a vow, and recalls his persecuting edicts. Judas Maccabæus sees in a vision the high priest Onias, and with

him "a man with gray hairs, and exceeding glorious," who is declared to be Jeremiah, the prophet of God, who "prayeth much for the people and the holy city" (15 : 12, 13). All this indicates the probability that the book was written to meet the demand for the marvellous, which was not satisfied by the simple record of the first book, and places it, as a history, on a far lower level. *Bible Educator*.

#### *The Apocryphal Writings and Judaism.*

From the period succeeding the return from the Exile to the Alexandrian period, roughly speaking, about a century intervened. This interval, which can scarcely be said to have a history in the true sense, nor a literature of its own, was the formative period of the nation in its new circumstances. Its certain outcome, as apparent in the *next* period, was something quite different from what had preceded it in what may be called Old Testament times. In *religious literature* its outcome was the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigraphic writings; in *religion and life*, that new direction which, in distinction to that of the Old Testament, is best characterized as *Judaism*, which in its full development we know as traditionalism and rabbinism. And yet, in or near to a period the outcome of which is admittedly so different, a certain school of critics would have us place a large portion of the legislation, and of the historical and didactic, if not the prophetic writings of the Old Testament!

Israel, emerging on the other side the Babylonian flood, appears not as Israel, but as the Jews. And of this their later literature bears ample evidence. We have here to reckon with three different tendencies. We notice, first, the working of the old spirit, which in due time would appear as traditionalism and rabbinism. This means reaction. Next, we have the new spirit, which in due time would appear as Hellenism. This means renewal and re-formation. Lastly, we have the ideal spirit, which, grasping the great hope of the future and of the Messianic kingdom, would in due time appear either as Jewish nationalism—in the great nationalist party (or in close connection with it)—or else as a pure apocalypticism. But as yet these three tendencies lay in great measure unseparated in the chaos over which the spirit of the future was brooding—waiting till outward events would differentiate them.

Two centuries had passed since the return from Babylon. At the end of them we find ourselves suddenly in the midst of a new-born activity in religious literature. We have sug-

gested this as possibly the period of the final redaction—not composition—of some, though perhaps not of all the youngest portions in the Old Testament canon. The new literature springs forth in Palestine, but chiefly in Alexandria. It is debased in literary character, chiefly imitative of the Old Testament writings, and as we would naturally have expected of the youngest portions among them, so that one might almost infer the comparative lateness of an Old Testament book from its imitation by one or more of the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha themselves mark their line of separation from the canonical books. The distinction in favor of the Old Testament is fully vindicated, the more closely we examine the teaching of the Apocrypha. The presentation of the Divine Being is no longer as in the Old Testament. Sometimes it is Grecian in its form, as chiefly in the Book of Wisdom, and, in minor degree, in some portions of Ecclesiasticus; in other books, as in Judith and Baruch, it is Judaic, narrow and nationalistic; while in Tobit we have almost the later rabbinic view of the propitiation of God by alms. Similar remarks apply to the presentation of the doctrines of creation and of providence. As regards the doctrine of angels, the Apocrypha have much more developed teaching, which in the case of Tobit descends to the low level of superstition.

As might be expected, both Grecianism and Hebrewism appear even more markedly in what such books as Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus have to tell us of man. The pre-existence of the soul, and its fall and degradation through its connection with the body, are taught side by side with a reluctant and almost solitary reference to the fall of man as presented in the Bible. But of the doctrine of original sin, as fully expressed in the New Testament, the Apocrypha, as Rabbinism, have nothing to tell us. In regard to moral duties, the tone of the Book of Proverbs is now absolutely secularized. A respectable religiosity and a sort of common-sense decency take the place of fervor of love and entireness of devotion. Reward in this life, or at most either in the Messianic world or in the life to come, are the leading motives; externalism of work, rather than deep inward spiritual views, characterizes the righteousness described. By the side of this we find in the Apocrypha of Grecian cast (Wisdom and partly Ecclesiasticus) a classification of the virtues after the philosophic model; while the Judaic Apocrypha (Judith and Tobit) represent on many points a low standard, not only in the story of Judith, but generally in regard to the

relation between man and God. In Ecclesiasticus we find throughout a twofold, somewhat incompatible direction—the Hellenistic by the side of the Judaic. This strange eclecticism may have been due to the original author of the book, or, as seems more likely, been introduced by the translator.

As regards the "after death," the characteristics of the Grecian Apocrypha, already noted, once more appear. Ecclesiasticus is not only less pronounced on these subjects than some of the canonical books, but is, to say the least, strangely silent on the "after death." The Book of Wisdom, while acknowledging the immortality of the soul and the judgment, so systematically ignores the resurrection of the body as to lead to the inference of its denial. The same may even more strongly be predicated of 1 Maccabees, which, indeed, has been regarded as representing the views of the Sadducees; while 2 Maccabees, in this respect, markedly reproduces the views of the Pharisees. In reference to the Messianic hope, we can only say that its personal aspect, as regards the Messiah, if present at all, recedes behind that of Israelitish, national prospects. Of these, alike in the anti-Gentile sense and in the exaltation of Israel, there is the fullest anticipation.

Thus we have in the Apocrypha—which, as already stated, must be regarded as embodying the outcome of the previous period—a marked divergence, on all main points, from the lines followed in the canonical books of the Old Testament. The latter, as has been well remarked, led up to the manger of Bethlehem; the Apocrypha may, as regards dogmatic views, be considered only a kind of preface to later Judaism. The religion of the Old Testament was that of the great prophetic future; the religion and hope of the Apocrypha are of the Israelitish past, which vaingloriously seeks in the future a realization commensurate to its past disappointment. The hope of the Old Testament centred in the Person of the Messiah; that of the Apocrypha, in the nation of the Jews. It is Judaism and the synagogue with which we have henceforth to do. But not thither had the finger of prophecy pointed. Not to the Jews, but to the spiritual Israel; not to the synagogue, but to the Church, belonged the inheritance of the promises and the future of the world. A. E.

#### *The Pseudepigraphic Writings.*

The so-called Pseudepigraphic writings take up, and further develop in a peculiar direction, the predictions of the Old Testament; they

present them in visions of the future, shaped in that peculiar imagery and language which we call apocalyptic; and they do so, not as the outcome of the inferences or speculations of their writers, but as bringing direct communications from Heaven, connected with such names as Enoch, Moses, Isaiah, Baruch, or Solomon. This, however, with notable exceptions; since perhaps the most interesting of these books is that which embodies the so-called Sibylline Oracles.

This describes one aspect of these writings. Another is their intensely Jewish character—not merely as setting forth the advantages and the future bliss of Israel, but in their references to the nations of the world; either hortatory—we might almost call it missionary—or else denunciatory; sometimes scornful, but always triumphant in tone. There are other tendencies, and of a party character, in these writings—mostly, as it seems to me, in opposition to the Pharisaic direction. Some of them are certainly of Hellenist origin—that is, they were the work not only of Western Jews, but are the outcome of Hellenist thought. But even those which may be regarded as springing from the soil of Palestine have not a Pharisaic cast. On the contrary, they all breathe, more or less, the new spirit. This is very remarkable, and bears witness to the fact that, with all its parade and pomp of Messianic assertion, traditionalism and rabbinism had no heart for and very little sympathy with the great Messianic hope of Israel. Theirs was another and, in many respects, antagonistic direction, in which the Messiah could only bear the part of a political deliverer. Yet another noteworthy point, of a different character, may here be mentioned. All the canonical books of the Old Testament have come down to us in Hebrew or Chaldee. But, as in the case of the Apocrypha, none of the pseudepigraphic writings have been preserved in that language, although some of them were no doubt written in the tongue of Palestine. We have them either in the Greek, or else in Ethiopic, in Latin, or other version. This also forms a line of demarcation, not to be quite ignored by those who would dispute the canonicity of some of the Old Testament writings.

The pseudepigraphic writings cover the period from about 170 before to about 90 after Christ. Those preserved to us are eight in number: The Book of Enoch, the Sibylline Oracles, the Psalter of Solomon, Little Genesis, 4th Esdras (our 2d Esdras), the Ascension and Vision of Isaiah, the Assumption of Moses, and

the Apocalypse of Baruch. Although, in their present form, some of them contain interpolated portions of a much later date, they are all deeply interesting and instructive; for, first, they give us an insight into the thoughts and expectations of the time—away from Pharisaism, Sadduceism and Essenism. Secondly, they present to us the continuance of the great Messianic hope. If certain of the Apocrypha, such as the story of the Maccabees or of Judith, would to the old Jewish world have been what Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" is to many of us, some of those visions of Israel and of the kingdom may have been eagerly read in Israel as a kind of apocalyptic "Pilgrim's Progress."

Probably the oldest of them is the so-called Book of Enoch, numbering 108 chapters. It consists, besides a prologue and an epilogue, of five portions, giving an account of the fall of the angels, of Enoch's rapt journeys through heaven and earth, together with certain apocalyptic portions about the kingdom of heaven and the advent of the Messiah. The oldest part of it is supposed to date from about 150 B.C.; the second oldest from the time of Herod the Great; the date of the others cannot be fixed.

The Sibylline Oracles, in Greek hexameters, consist in their present form of twelve books. They are full of interpolations—the really ancient portions forming part of the first two books, and the largest part of book iii. (verses 97–807). These sections are deeply imbued with the Messianic spirit. They date from about 140 before our era, while another small portion of the same book is supposed to date from the year 32 B.C.

The small collection known as the Psalter of Solomon consists of eighteen psalms, and probably dates from more than half a century before our era. The work, which I regard as fragmentary, breathes ardent Messianic expectancy.

Little Genesis, or the Book of Jubilees, dates probably from about the time of Christ. It is a kind of supplement to the Book of Genesis, and breathes a strong anti-Roman spirit.

From about the same time, or a little earlier, dates the so-called Assumption of Moses—unfortunately only a fragment of twelve chapters. It consists of an historical and an apocalyptic portion, and is strongly anti-Pharisaic in spirit, especially as regards purifications. This is very remarkable; nor is it less interesting to find that this is one of the works from which Jude quotes (verse 9), the other being the Book of Enoch (verses 14, 15).

On the other hand, there are two of the Pseudepigrapha which bear evident reference to the writings of Paul. Both of them date after the destruction of Jerusalem; but the Apocalypse of Baruch is probably older than 4 Esdras (our apocryphal 2 Esdras). The Apocalypse of Baruch is also unfortunately not quite complete. It consists of eighty-seven chapters. Our interest is stirred by noticing how closely some of its teaching runs alongside that of Paul—either controversially, as in regard to the doctrine of justification, or conciliatorily and intermediately, as in regard to the consequences of the fall in original guilt; or imitatively, as in regard to the resurrection of the body. If the author of the Apocalypse of Baruch must have read the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and the First to the Corinthians, the influence of Pauline teaching appears even more strongly, almost exaggeratedly, in the statements of 4 Esdras in regard to the fall and original sin.

Lastly, among these works, we have to mention the so-called Ascension and Vision of Isaiah, describing the martyrdom of the prophet, and containing certain apocalyptic portions about what he saw in heaven. Although based on an older Jewish document, the book is chiefly of Christian heretical authorship.

Such are the monuments left us of the ancient apocalyptic—or, as from their assumption of spurious authorship it is called, pseudepigraphic—literature. Its interest is threefold. 1. Historical. They set before us another direction than either in the Apocrypha or in Hellenism. As previously stated, the Apocrypha are either historical—including the legendary—or else philosophizing. They carry us back to the glories of Judaism, or else seek to reconcile it with present thought and philosophy—which, indeed, is the final object of Hellenism. But this apocalyptic literature represents a quite different tendency. It lays, so to speak, one hand on the Old Testament hope, while with the other it gropes after the fulfilment in that dim future of which it seeks to pierce the gloom. 2. The Pseudepigrapha are of theological interest as showing what the Jews before and about the time of Christ—or at least one section of them—were expecting concerning the Messiah and Messianic times. One might indeed long to know something more of the personal views and feelings of yet another class—that represented in New Testament history by such names as Zacharias, Elizabeth, Anna, Simeon, and even Joseph and the Virgin Mother. But beyond the thought that their

steadfast gaze was bent on the eastern sky, where sure prophecy taught them that the Sun of Righteousness would rise, we have not the means of associating with them anything more definite than intense, simple and receptive expectancy. 3. Yet another, and only in one sense inferior, interest attaches to these writings. We may designate it as exegetical. For if these books represent the symbolism and the form in which apocalyptic thoughts presented themselves to a large portion of the Jewish people, it will readily be understood that knowledge of it must also be of great importance in the study of the apocalyptic portions of the New Testament—not, indeed, as regards the substance, but the form and imagery of them. *Edersheim*.

[For a general account of the teaching of these writings concerning the Messiah and the Messianic kingdom, the reader is referred to Dr. Edersheim's volume entitled "Philosophy and History in Relation to the Messiah," from which the preceding summaries are taken. B.]

#### *The Septuagint.*

There is nothing in the whole course of the Jewish annals more remarkable than the series of events which led to the preparation of the Greek version of the Old Testament. What that work has accomplished in the diffusion of revealed truth through the world no human mind can ever estimate. How the way of the Lord was prepared by it, how it laid the foundations on which Christianity itself built up its higher and fuller communications, we can never perfectly describe, although the fact that it to a large extent superseded the Hebrew Bible, and was for a considerable period the sacred volume of the Christian Church, must be sufficient to show that it was a chosen instrument of Divine providence in the work of human salvation. Dr. Stanley remarks: "It was not the original Hebrew, but the Septuagint translation through which the religious truths of Judaism became known to the Greek and the Roman. It was the Septuagint which was the Bible of the Evangelists and Apostles in the first century, and of the Christian Church for the first age of its existence, which is still the only recognized authorized text of the Eastern Church, and the basis of the only authorized text of the Latin Church. Widely as it differs from the Hebrew Scriptures in form, in substance, in chronology, in language; unequal, imperfect, grotesque as are its renderings, it has, nevertheless, through large periods of ecclesiastical history, rivalled, if not super-

seded, those Scriptures themselves." The probability is that the version originated quite naturally from the requirements of the Jews in Alexandria, as they adopted the Greek language, and became less familiar with Hebrew and Chaldee. *Redford.*

*Intermitted Inspiration—Its Causes and Significance.*

Of all the historical periods, the four centuries intervening between the close of the Old Testament inspiration and the birth of Christ seem to be the most obscure, and to have the least significance. Those centuries of great sorrow, of national aspiration, of unsurpassed heroism, and of final subjection and despair, are passed by without any inspired characterization. During this time Palestine had emerged from its provincial seclusion, and come within the whirl of the struggles of the great nations.

If we inquire into the causes of the cessation and withdrawal of inspiration during this period, it will be easy to see that prominent among them is that the necessity no longer existed. There had already been a sufficient Divine communication. The history of the development of the Church from one family, and the one man Abraham, and the migration from Egypt, and the growth into a kingdom, and the Exile, and the Return, had been fully given. A rich psalmody, by which the servants of Jehovah might express the joy and sorrow of the soul, had been produced. The prophets had spoken, and had so minutely described the coming of Christ, and His history and office, that even the manner of His sufferings was communicated by them to the people. All the light needed for instruction and reproof, and for the awakening of hope, had been furnished. Had a new race of prophets arisen, their revelations could not have altered either the reception given to our Lord, or in any vital sense have been an improvement upon the bold utterances of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and the lesser seers.

Further, it was during this time that the Jew had his first successful opportunity to learn that his prosperity did not depend on temporal glory. The brief national revival, under the Maccabæan family, is a striking proof of the final failure of patriotism without the element of religion. We must sympathize with the aspirations of the aged Jewish priest Mattathias, who escaped, with his five sons, John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan, from the persecution in Jerusalem, and dwelt in Modin. He

longed for deliverance from the heel of the foreigner. His ancestor, Chasmon, had given the Asmonæan name to the family, and it was now the hope of Mattathias that one of his sons, at least, might restore the kingdom. Judas was the leader. He was as brave as David had been. He passed into history as Maccabæus, or The Hammerer, just as, later, Charles was called Martel, because he gave the death-blow to his foes at Tours. The reign of the Maccabæans was brilliant. It became a terror to the surrounding nations. But it was political, and its inspiring motives were purely secular. There was no great moral background to it from beginning to end. In fact, there was a secularization of even the religious worship of the people. With the rulers of that family, the revival of Judaism was the political overthrow of the Greeks. In due time the Romans came, and not only captured the country, but supported on the throne the Herods, a family which combined all the corrupt qualities of both the Jewish and Roman races.

One can read in those centuries of intermittent inspiration the Divine purpose to preserve a remnant of the sacred people, as the starting-point of a new dispensation, in spite of the persistent attempts, on the part of both the Oriental conquerors and the Greeks, to blot out the worship of Jehovah. One would naturally expect that if the Persians did not complete the overthrow of the worship of Jehovah in Palestine, the Greeks would certainly succeed. Their culture and military glory would be likely to captivate, and make a long-despondent people look in other directions for the beginnings of a more hopeful career. But this rule, with its one hundred and sixty-four years of persistent effort to eradicate the worship of God and substitute the mythology of Greece, proved a failure. The Jewish people were more positive monotheists afterward than before. With all their infirmities, with their misreading of the prophetic Scriptures, and with their realistic interpretation of the Messianic predictions, they were still lovers of the Temple service, and lived in hope of a better time for the old faith of the fathers. There is just this philosophy, then, underlying the Greek rule: the Jew was a Jew still. He had faith, often mistaken and misguided, in Jehovah. No enchanting myth from beautiful Greece had any charm for him. He wanted the Greek, with all his splendid history and idealism, away. He was ready to die, but not to become a cultivated pagan.

When we remember that it was during this

period that the world's soil was prepared for the propagation of the Gospel, the significance of the interval assumes greater force. The Greek language became the vehicle for thought in all the centres, as a direct result of Alexander's conquests. Alexandria was built up into a strong Hellenistic centre, whence went out in later years the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. Jewish colonies, the point of pagan persecution, swarmed around the Mediterranean, and became the nuclei of the Pauline societies, and the beginning of universal Christianity. The Jewish nationality passed away forever, and paganism had proved its incapacity to take its place. It was a universal breaking up of the old soil, and its full preparation for the broadest sowing known to men, whose ripest harvest we have not yet seen. *Bp. Hurst.*

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As expressing the controlling aim and purpose of this volume, we herewith present, in part, the admirable Preface of Dr. Henry Cowles to his volume entitled "Hebrew History." Our large citations from Dr. Cowles in nearly all the volumes of the Bible-Work (with his full permission, given many years ago) indicate our high estimate of the exceeding and permanent worth of his thorough and life-long studies upon the entire Word of God. B.

"This volume presents the sacred history of the Hebrew people from the death of Solomon to the close of the Old Testament. Its special objects are—to trace the hand of God in this history, and to suggest the advancing revelations made of His character and moral government; to develop the leading human characters, and the significance of the great historic events; to explain difficult passages; to bring out the connections between sacred and profane history, in order both to illustrate and to confirm the records of Scripture; to place the history of the Old Testament by the side of its prophecy, in order to infuse into the history somewhat of its own living soul, and to give to prophecy its due illustration and impression. The author's aim and hope have been to stimulate and aid the reading of these historical books entire, by setting forth incidentally the exquisite beauty of its narratives, the interest of its historic events, and its great wealth of most precious truth—every way worthy of an Author truly Divine. All history is useful in so far as it makes truthful revelations of man's doings and of God's agencies in and above them; how, then, does it behoove us to honor and to study this one unparalleled history in which the relations of God to men and of men to God are traced with God's own unerring finger! How rich are we in having one model history of which we know that God Himself is the Author!"

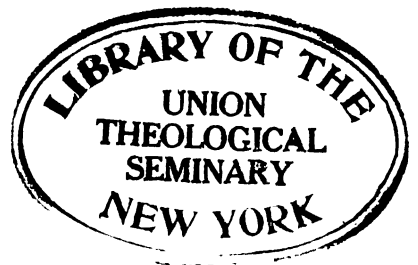
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