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THE
FINDING OF THE BOOK;

AN ESSAY

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE DOGMA OF INFALLIBILITY,

BY

JOHN ROBERTSON,

COUPAR ANGUS.

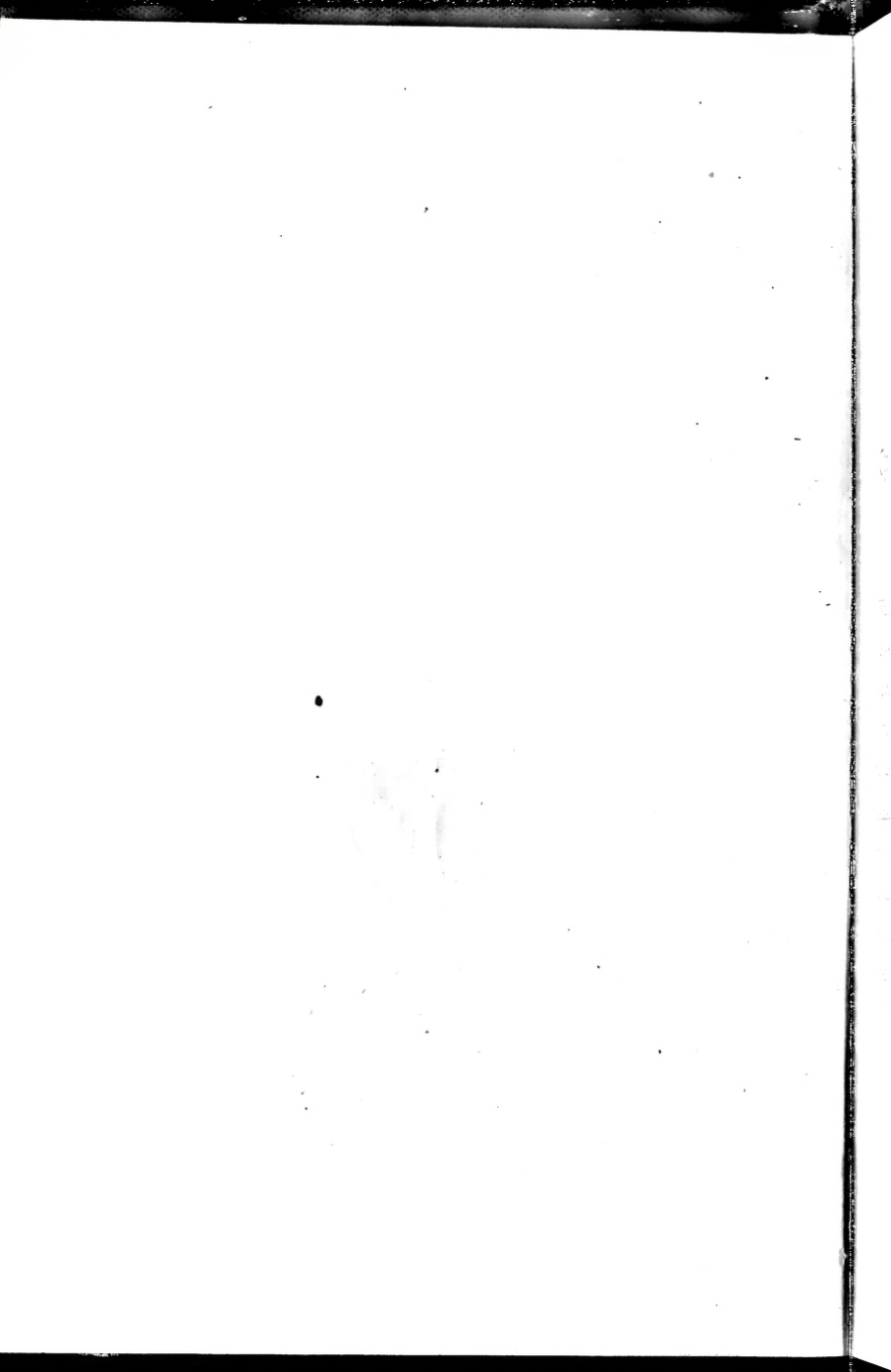


"It is better to speak honest error, than to suppress conscious truth."

"I know of but one thing safe in the universe, and that is *truth*; and I know of but one way to truth for an individual mind, and that is *unfettered thought*; and I know but one path for the multitude to truth, and that is *thought freely expressed*."

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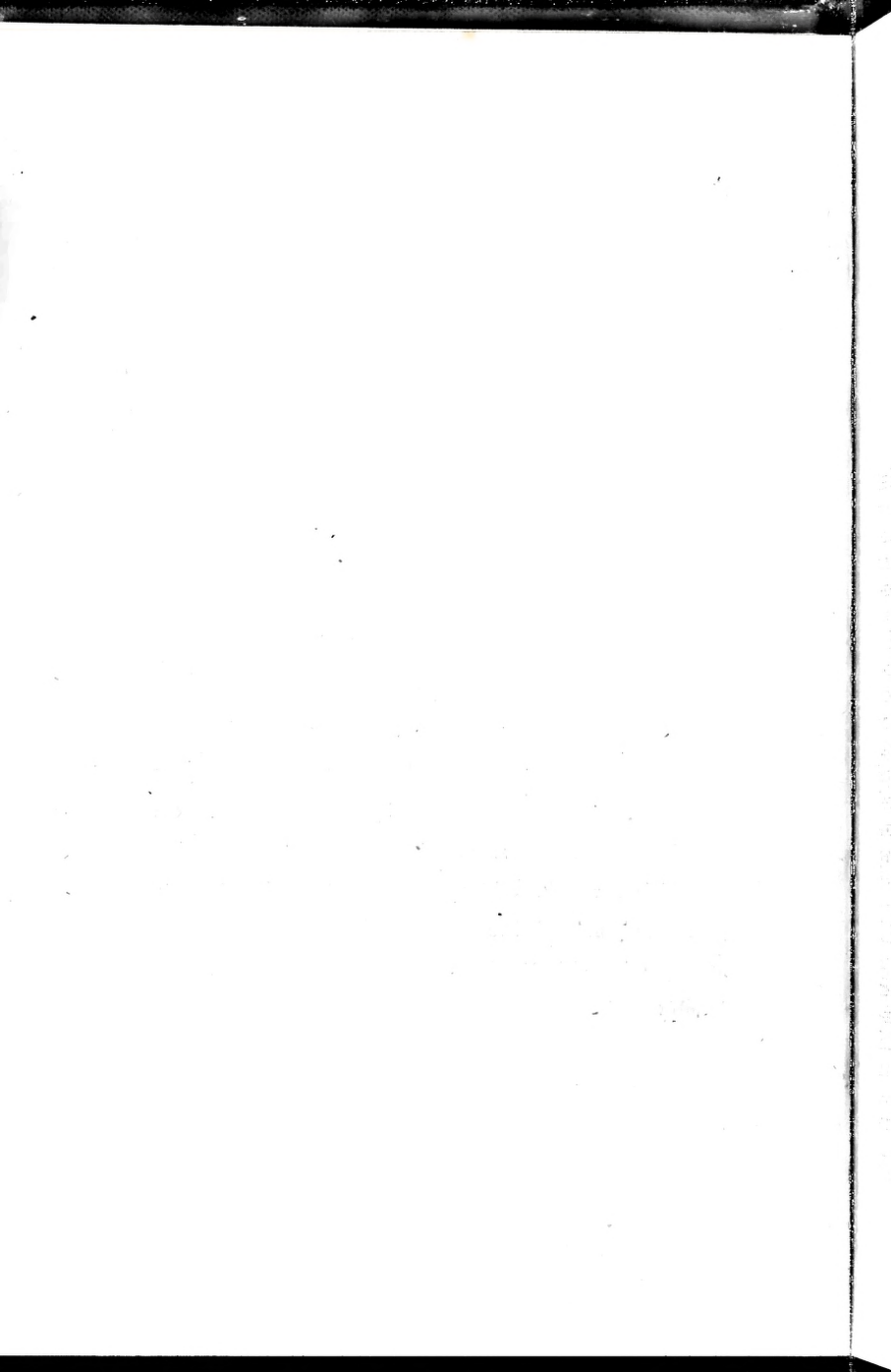
TO

The Right Reverend John William Colenso,

Lord Bishop of Natal,

Whom I honour and esteem as foremost among modern Apostles and Prophets of Divine Truth, and whom I regard with gratitude and love, as one of those Leaders, to whose guidance, under God, I am largely indebted for the enlightenment of my mind, and for my establishment in the Christian Faith, by my deliverance from the darkness of that superstitious bondage to the letter, in which I was brought up, and in which I for many years vainly struggled to find light, this rude essay—a first attempt—is, without his knowledge or permission, very humbly dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

THE Brahmins, the Parsees, the Budhists, the Jews, the Christians, the Mohammedans, and several other denominations, have their canonical books of revelation, which are in each case regarded as a supreme external authority dictated or communicated to man by God.

Thus, for example, the "Bana," signifying *the Word*, is the sacred book of the Budhists, containing the discourses of their great original, Gotama Budha, who was born, as appears to be historically ascertained, at least 624 years before the Christian era, so that he was probably a contemporary of king Josiah and of the prophet Jeremiah. These discourses, however, were not written down in a collected form, till about three hundred years after the death of the great teacher, and critics have questioned the purity and genuineness of their previous transmission, but the vast multitude of orthodox Budhists have never for a moment entertained any such doubt. The degree of authority ascribed to this revelation may be judged of from the very high estimation in which its author is held. "Gotama Budha is worshipped as a divine incarnation, a god-man, who came into this world to enlighten men, to redeem them, and to point out to them the way to eternal bliss."* The favourite theme of the very numerous Buddhist authors is accordingly said to be the praise of the Bana, in the expression of which the

* "Faiths of the World," vol. i., p. 399.

most exalted and devout figures of speech are employed, such, for instance, as these:—"The discourses of Budha are as a divine charm to cure the poison of evil desire; a divine medicine to heal the disease of anger; a lamp in the midst of the darkness of ignorance; a ship in which to sail to the opposite shore of the ocean of existence; a collyrium for taking away the eye-film of heresy; a succession of trees bearing immortal fruit, placed here and there, by which the traveller may be enabled to cross the desert of existence; a straight highway by which to pass to the incomparable wisdom; a flavour more exquisite than any other in the three worlds; a treasury of the best things which it is possible to obtain; and a power by which may be appeased the sorrow of every sentient being."*

It is computed that adherence to this system of religion is professed by no fewer than 369,000,000 of human beings in India, China, Tartary, Thibet, and Burmah; while nominal Christians, of all countries and all creeds, are reckoned to number about 256,000,000, of whom about 60,000,000 are called Protestants.

But Buddhism, though now nearly twenty-five centuries old, was the Protestantism of a reformation from Brahminism, the antiquity of which is much greater; and no less than 150,000,000 of the Hindoos still adhere to the old religion, believing in the infallibility of the four "Vedas," or sacred books, of which it appears to be undisputed that one is at least as old as the time of Moses, while all the four are very ancient. "The language in which the Vedas are written is the Sanskrit, which the Hindoos seriously believe to be the language of the gods, and to have been communicated to men by a voice from heaven, while the Vedas themselves have proceeded from the mouth of the Creator." †

An intelligent Hindoo thus expresses his views of

* "Faiths of the World," vol. i., p. 279.

† "Faiths of the World," vol. ii., p. 54.

theology :—"We really lament the ignorance or uncharitableness of those who confound our representative worship with the Phœnician, Grecian, or Roman idolatry, as represented by European writers, and then charge us with polytheism, in the teeth of thousands of texts in the Purânas"—(sacred poems of the Vedas)—"declaring in clear and unmistakable terms that there is but one God, who manifests himself as Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, in his functions of creation, preservation, and destruction."*

All his conceptions of God are thus moulded and regulated by the Vedas, which contain for him the authoritative and infallible revelation of trinity in unity, to doubt or deny which is for him infidelity. He finds God in the book, and must believe that God is exactly as there represented, or not believe at all; for the book is to him God's revelation of Himself.

So also the Parsee catechism teaches the doctrine of plenary inspiration, in terms remarkably similar to those which our most orthodox Churchmen are wont to employ :—

"Q. What religion has our prophet (Zoroaster or Zurthost) brought to us from God ?

"A. The disciples of our prophet have recorded in several books that religion . . . We consider these books as heavenly books (the "Zendavesta") because God sent the tidings of these books to us through the holy Zurthost.

"Q. What commands has God sent us through his prophet, the exalted Zurthost ?

"A. To know God as one; to know the prophet, the exalted Zurthost, as the true prophet; to believe the religion and the Avesta brought by him as true beyond all manner of doubt; to believe in the goodness of God; not to disobey any of the commands of the Mazdiashna religion; to avoid evil deeds; to exert for good deeds; to pray five times in the day; to believe in the reckoning and justice on the

* From an English lecture by a Hindoo, quoted in "Chips from a German Workshop," by Prof. Max Müller, p. xvii. (preface); quoted also by Dr. Norman Macleod, in "Good Words," February 1869, p. 100.

fourth morning after death ; to hope for heaven and to fear hell ; to consider doubtless the day of general destruction and resurrection ; to remember always that God has done what he willed, and shall do what he wills ; to face some luminous object while worshipping God," &c.*

If the Parsee cannot or dare not doubt nor dispute the dogma, that the message which contains these tidings was communicated by God to Zoroaster, who lived, according to the best authorities, about eight hundred years before Moses ;—if he must, per force of religious training and tradition, believe that this revelation comes to him through Zoroaster from God ;—then it is clear that he must accept whatever this revelation tells him as the word of God, and, therefore, "beyond all manner of doubt," authoritatively true, in the strictest and fullest sense, in every particular of its contents, and in every expression which it uses. The Parsee, accordingly, regards the Zendavesta as the revealed will of God for his conduct in this life, and for his salvation here and hereafter ; and he adheres to its doctrines and precepts, however unintelligible these may be, because he submits his reason to the authority of the book, in which he believes that God speaks to him. He, therefore, closes his mind against all argument of error or imperfection in the book ; and when told of historical or other difficulties which stand in the way of his belief, he boldly argues, to the complete satisfaction of those who hold the same opinion, that faith must overcome the difficulties of reason, and that sceptical criticism is a temptation and a snare. A confirmed belief of this kind is proof against all the attempts of the Christian missionary to convince the Parsee that his rites and ceremonies and superstitious beliefs are doctrines and commandments of men. For him they have the same authority and certainty as the revelation of God's existence. He is under mental bondage to the Zen-

* "Chips from a German Workshop," vol. i., pp. 174, 175.

dayesta in every word and letter of its contents, and all its doctrines and laws alike command his unwavering acceptance and profound submission. He has nothing else on which to trust for welfare and for happiness, but on the doctrines and laws which are written in that book. To deny or to cast off these, is to him atheism and infidelity. To believe and obey them is religion. Every ceremony and observance of his sacred law is, therefore, to him a sacred duty. He believes all these things, not because he discerns or perceives their inherent truthfulness and reality, but because they are written in God's book. He holds that this revelation is the authority which warrants and enables him to believe in the existence and goodness of God, and in the duty or privilege of worship, and obedience to be rendered by men. If he be a strictly orthodox Parsee, he will hold that the Zend-avesta is the *only* true revelation, and that God can be truly and acceptably worshipped in no other way but according to the doctrines and observances which it makes known. If, however, he be somewhat latitudinarian in his views, as most of the young Parsees now are, he may, as many of them do, admit that the Brahmins, Christians, Mohammedans, and Jews, among whom he lives, may have their several revelations, good enough for those to whom they have been given, and all in some sort making known the One Great Ormuzd, but none of them intended nor suitable for the Parsee, none of them at all approaching in excellence to the incomparable Avesta, and none of them possessing any merit except in so far as they all more or less distantly resemble it.

If his mind has been still further enlightened by education and reading, or by intercourse with educated and intelligent men, of whom there are said to be now a good many among the Parsees, he may perhaps be able to comprehend that Zoroaster must have been a wise man, who meditated much upon God as

revealed in his own reasoning soul, and in all those other scarcely less wonderful manifestations of creative wisdom and power, with which God had enabled that soul to become acquainted, especially as revealed in the Sun, which was to him the visible and sensible source of light, heat, motion, life, and happiness; and he may thus see that the grand distinction of the Prophet was only his ability to discern and to know, more clearly than his contemporaries, those things which every enlightened mind may and ought to infer from its own perceptions. While profiting much by all that is pure and good and true in the pages of the ancient sage, he may thus feel himself perfectly at liberty to reject any or all of those doctrines, laws, or ceremonies which to his modern mind appear false, foolish, evil, or unjust, however reasonable, right, and true these may have been thought in the days of Zoroaster, and during all the long ages of the ancient Persian empire. For the Parsees of our day are the descendants of the faithful remnant of the ancient Persian people, who refused to be converted by the conquering sword of Islam, and who chose rather to suffer exile from the country than to forsake the religion of their ancestors.

We may well suppose, I think we may be sure, that Zoroaster wrote because he believed, and intended thereby merely to assist or enable his disciples and followers to discern for themselves, as he did, the goodness and the truth of what he taught them; but the religion of the Parsees, resting on the authority of a book, has, like every other such religion, largely degenerated towards a worship of the letter—bibliolatry—a faith in the book, and has served as a veil to hinder and obscure the revelation of God in the soul. If we have to argue with a bigoted adherent of the conservative orthodox school, which is still the most numerous among the Parsees, including nearly all their priests, we may expect to find him maintaining that, apart from his book of revelation, there

can be no sufficient evidence nor true knowledge of the existence of God, of His character, nor of His will concerning man's duty.

This religion has unquestionably been useful in preserving its votaries, through many generations, from falling into the grosser forms of image worship, from the extreme moral degradation with which these are generally associated, from atheism on the one hand, and from polytheism on the other. The Zenda-vesta has thus been the vehicle of light and instruction to the minds of countless millions through thousands of years; but, however beneficial its influence may in these respects have been, it now stands to many as a barrier in the way of intellectual development and mental progress, because the infallibility ascribed to it renders them blind to the immediate present fact that God is in and around *them*, and that He their Creator has endowed them with faculties, capable of indefinitely great cultivation and improvement, and exactly adapted for the reception and interpretation of the great revelation of Himself, which with His own hand He hath written on *man*, and on every other thing which He hath created and made. The Zenda-vesta is indeed a revelation in a way, for, along with much error, it teaches great truths; but the belief of these truths *on its authority*, being inseparable from the belief of much else that it contains, necessarily implies ignorance of that which alone deserves the name of revelation, the realising discernment that the things are true.

It is a most pregnant and wise remark, and may be appropriately quoted here, that "the real problem is, not how a revelation was possible, but how a veil could ever have been drawn between the creature and the Creator, intercepting from the human mind the rays of Divine truth."* Even a belief in the

* From a lecture on the "*Science of Religion*," by Prof. M. Müller, at the Royal Institution, as briefly reported in the *Scotsman* newspaper of 1st March 1870.

existence of God, when that belief rests on the authority ascribed to prophet, priest, church, or book, becomes a veil to obscure more or less that revelation which may be read, in God's own handwriting, on every page of the great volume of Nature with which we are surrounded, and the authentic transcript of which is "written *not with ink*, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart,"—the tablets or faculties of the mind (2 Cor. iii. 3).

Precisely such a veil was thick upon the minds of the Jews, at the time when Jesus of Nazareth lived and died as a witness for the truth, denouncing and rending the veil which concealed it, that God dealeth with us as with sons, and that He hath abundantly revealed Himself as our wise, holy, and loving Father. It was precisely the adherence of the Jews to the letter of their written revelation, which had blinded the eyes of their minds to the spiritual light of the truth which that revelation contained; and thus those who were converted to Christianity are, most suggestively, said to have had their eyes opened—to have had their sight restored—to have been turned from darkness to light, that they should serve God in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life and light to discern our Father's will, that we should be merciful as He is merciful, that we should love truth, and peace, and justice, and all our fellow-men, and that we should *do good*, as knowing that we are "children of the Highest, who is kind even unto the unthankful and to the evil."—(Luke vi. 35, 36.)

The superstitious reverence in which such veils are held by those whose minds are obscured thereby, and the many fond prejudices which are invariably fostered in the shade thereof, constitute the most stubborn and insurmountable of all obstacles to the reception of the Gospel of light. It is well known, and

might, if necessary, be abundantly proved, that it is more difficult and more expensive to convert one Brahmin, Budhist, or Parsee, to Christianity, than it is to convert ten of the far more degraded fetish worshippers of Africa, or savages and cannibals of the Pacific; and need I say how few and far between are the trophies of success, resulting from our missions to the Jews and Mohammedans?

There may be some among my readers whose minds are blinded by such a veil, remaining, for them as for the Jews, "*untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament,*" (2 Cor. iii. 14-18); so that they regard it as their duty to God to submit their reason to the authority of that book, and to believe that its legendary and miraculous stories, that its incongruous, inaccurate, and even contradictory histories, and that the idolatrous and superstitious rites and beliefs, of which in many passages it expresses approval, are all alike no less certainly and infallibly true than are its declarations that God is good to all men, righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works; feeling as if there could be no religious peace nor comfort for them, unless they by faith be able to surmount the difficulties of reason, and to believe everything which the Book says is true, as they believe its most indubitable verities; for, as it is written that by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, so it is said that by faith must all such intellectual difficulties be overcome, though to reason they may appear insurmountable as walls built up to heaven.

It is my solemn conviction that this notion of Scriptural infallibility or supreme authority is essentially *anti-christian*; and that those whose minds are fettered or blinded by any of its various modifications, are excluded thereby from that liberating and enlightening influence, which is again and again declared to be the most essential and distinguishing feature of

spiritual Christianity (Matt. vi. 22, 23 ; John viii. 32, 33, 36 ; Rom. viii. 15 ; Gal. v. 1, 13, 14.)

My chief purpose and earnest desire is to show to such persons that the *veil*, on which they look with so much veneration, is utterly devoid of the clearness, the certainty, and the harmony of truth, which they persuade themselves that it infallibly presents to their view, even in those portions of it where their fallible vision can discern nothing but mystification, error, injustice, or sin ; that its texture, when closely examined, is found in many parts to consist of the most unreasonable and irreconcilable products of human ignorance, error, and time-serving policy ; and that it is, therefore, when viewed as a whole, notwithstanding the majesty, truth, and beauty of very many passages, entirely destitute of anything like that infallibility or supreme authority, *which it nowhere claims for itself*, but which has been, through ignorance or superstition, or both, erroneously ascribed to it, and by the ascription of which it retains its false dominion over their minds, as if it were the Word of God.

I hope, by an examination of the structure of the veil, in the earliest stages of its development, to show that a belief in its divine origin, authority, and perfection, is as unreasonable and false as any superstition to which the human mind has ever been in subjection.

Whatever opinion my readers may form, I can and do say for myself that I have studied what I have written with profound reverence and love for the truth, with much earnestness of thought and purpose, and with a feeling which I cannot better describe than by calling it a delightful sense of spiritual guidance and enlightenment as I proceeded with my work.

The essay was *commenced* without the slightest idea of publication in February last year, for the purpose of sifting, maturing, and linking together in my own

Preface.

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mind numerous detached notes and queries, which I had jotted down during a previous course of biblical reading and study.

I have been encouraged to publish it by the opinion of some friends, and by my own hope that it may be useful and helpful to some who, like myself, are earnest inquirers after truth.

J. R.

FORFAR ROAD, COUPAR ANGUS,
1st June, 1870.



TRUTH is the "*Supreme Authority*," or "*Standard*," to which, as to "*the Word of God*," an appeal is made in this essay. The enduring power, efficacy, and sufficiency of this standard are well described by the poet MILTON in the following extract from "the noblest of his prose works."

"Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter? Her refuting is the best and surest suppressing. He who hears what praying there is for light and clear knowledge to be sent down among us, would think of other matters to be constituted beyond the discipline of Geneva, framed and fabricated already to our hands. Yet when the new light which we beg for shines in upon us, there be who envy and oppose, if it come not first in at their casements. What a collusion is this, whenas we are exhorted by the wise man to use diligence, 'to seek for wisdom as for hidden treasures,' early and late, that another shall enjoin us to know nothing but by statute! When a man hath been labouring the hardest labour in the deep mines of knowledge, hath furnished out his findings in all their equipage, drawn forth his reasons, as it were a battle, ranged, scattered, and defeated all objections in his way, calls out his adversary into the plain, offers him the advantage of wind and sun if he please, only that he may try the matter by dint of argument; for his opponent then, to skulk, to lay ambushments, to keep a narrow bridge of licensing where the challenger should pass, though it be valour enough in soldiership, is but weakness and cowardice in the wars of Truth. For who knows not that TRUTH IS STRONG, next to the Almighty? She needs no policies, nor stratagems, nor licensings, to make her victorious; those are the shifts and the defences that error uses against her power; give her but room, and do not bind her when she sleeps."

CHAPTER I.

THE FINDING OF THE BOOK—INTRODUCTION.

B. C. 623.*

2 KINGS xxii. 8, 10, 11.—“And Hilkiab the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiab gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. . . . And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiab the priest hath delivered me a book, and Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.”

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 14, 15, 18, 19.—“And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiab the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. And Hilkiab answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiab delivered the book to Shaphan. . . . Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiab the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.”

The discovery here recorded was a most momentous event, and the account of its occurrence, and of its attending circumstances, is one of the most interesting and suggestive passages in the early history of the Bible. Its happening seems to have been so fortuitous and unexpected, and its import so overwhelming and amazing, that the king in his penitent

* The dates and periods of time, when not specially explained, are all taken from or founded on the generally accepted chronology, as given in “Bagster’s Polyglot Bible.”

terror rent his clothes, and in his perplexity commanded some of the chief priests and scribes, saying:—

2 KINGS xxii. 13.—“Go ye, enquire 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.”

The light of such a lamp, thus suddenly rekindled, must have immediately thrown, as the contemplation of it still does throw, a most peculiar and instructive reflection upon the previous history of the nation. It was found that God had given to their ancestors, eight centuries before then, a miraculous, infallible code of laws, of which no distinct trace, recollection, nor tradition had come down to them, and of which the true character and record had remained for ages lost, unknown, and forgotten, until this single copy happened at last to be turned up from under the accumulated dust of centuries in the temple.

We should, therefore, expect to find in the writings and histories of those preceding centuries, clear evidence, if not distinct record, of the sudden disappearance or gradual neglect of the book, and of the consequent tendency of the priests and people, with each succeeding wave of change, to diverge further and further from the laws, ceremonies, and institutions of that Levitical code, which had now so strangely come up as a witness against a generation of men, to whom, and to whose fathers, it had been unknown (Deut. xxxi. 26). We should expect to find, in each *receding* period before the reign of Josiah, clearer and clearer traces of its observance, more and more complete conformity to its ceremonies and arrangements, and more and more accurate details regarding the classification, duties, privileges, and provision of its elaborate hierarchy. We should

expect to find the distinctness of this recognition increasing with each step backwards, until we should arrive at a point where we should discern, by the notices and instances of its observance, or of its guilty and known neglect, that the old law in its complete form was then in the hands of the priests and in the minds of the people.

If we shall find, on the contrary, that in each receding period, prior to the alleged discovery, there was less and less recognition of the law; if we find that, instead of being gradually disused and lost sight of, the law, through a series of reformations and changes, became gradually more and more developed, so that in each earlier reformation the code of religious observances and of ecclesiastical enactments was notably further from being complete than it was in each later reformation; if we find that the historical period which approaches nearest to the date of Moses, to whom the authorship and promulgation of the entire law is ascribed, is precisely the period in which there appears no trace whatever of the Levitical law, no record of its observance, nor reproof for its neglect; and if we can thus trace the law in its growth, from rude and primitive times of beginning, through several clearly marked stages of progressive development, we may in that case find ourselves shut up to the conclusion that Hilkiah's production was only a new, *or final*, phase of the long continued growth, and that, whatever may be the merit or the demerit of the Levitical code, it must in its complete form stand or fall, apart from the sanction of Mosaic authorship, and of divine inspiration through Moses.

In order to guard against this inference, and to evade the difficulties which to their minds it suggests, some commentators have thought of lessening the importance of the discovery, by assuming that the book which was found was only that version or com-

pendium of the law which is given in the book of Deuteronomy; but this hypothesis cannot be reconciled with the account given of the celebration of the passover in Josiah's time.

2 KINGS xxiii. 21, 22.—“And the king commanded all the people, saying, keep the passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant. Surely there was not holden 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.*”

Now the laws relating to the passover in Deuteronomy are very brief and incomplete (Deut. xvi. 1-8); while the full instructions regarding this observance are to be found in other portions of the Pentateuch (Exod. xii. 1-20 : Num. xxviii. 16-25); so that the discovery of Deuteronomy alone would certainly not have incited nor enabled Josiah to celebrate the passover better than the pious and zealous reformers and kings of earlier date might and would have done, if they had possessed the *other* books.

The historian in *Kings* makes the discovery of the book *antecedent* to the reforms instituted by Josiah; while, in *Chronicles*, it is represented as *subsequent* thereto.

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 8.—“Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when *he had purged* the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the Scribe, &c.”

If it were necessary to decide which of these is the true account of the matter, probability would favour the narrative in *Kings*; because it is more reasonable to suppose, that Josiah became acquainted with the law, before he obeyed it, than that he so far fulfilled it first, and then discovered it afterwards.

Having been sent to “*inquire of the Lord,*”

2 KINGS xxii. 14.—“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 college ;) and *they communed with her.*"

And she commenced her reply by announcing dreadful judgment on the people and on the place, because of their idolatry,—even "all the curses that are written in the book," says the record, according to which Josiah had just made an end of purging the land from idolatry. But, as for Josiah himself, the prophetess concluded,—

2 KINGS xxii. 18, 20; and 2 CHRON. xxxiv. 26, 28.—
"Thus saith the Lord God of Israel. . . Behold I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace."

This is the only original prediction by Huldah, which has come down to us ; and it will not stand the test, which the Pentateuch instructs us to apply to all such prophetic utterances.

DEUT. xviii. 21, 22.—"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken ; but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously ; thou shalt not be afraid of him."

Instead of being gathered to his grave in peace, the next chapter of each narrative contains the account of Josiah's death,—killed in battle with Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt. (2 Kings xxiii. 29 ; 2 Chron. xxxv. 23, 24.)

Huldah's reply seems, however, to have been received as a valid and sufficient confirmation of the authenticity of the book which had been found ; and it was accordingly publicly acknowledged as that concerning which—

DEUT. xxxi. 25, 26.—"Moses commanded the Levites which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark

of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."

The consultation with Huldah appears to have been the only form of inquiry which was considered necessary for testing the claims of the book. No one seems to have thought of employing the outward and ordinary means for ascertaining whether or not it was what it professed to be, or rather what its promulgators declared that it was. We have no record of any kind of critical examination, comparison or research; and, so far as we can learn *from the two histories*, there was not even a doubt nor a question of this kind suggested by king, priests, prophets, or people. If any one conceived a doubt about the genuineness of the book, prudence would seem to have counseled such a one to keep his doubts to himself; for, if any were disposed to ask troublesome questions instead of promptly assenting and submitting to the new confession of faith, and to the new claims of the ruling hierarchy, means certainly would not be wanting to silence such presumptuous scepticism; and so we read that "*all the people stood to the covenant.*"

In my opinion, there is here a subject for enquiry, too much neglected by the biblical commentators with whom I am acquainted; and it appears to me strange that, while so much has been written, and so much ingenuity employed, both in the attack and in the defence of the Pentateuch itself, so very little attention seems to have been bestowed upon this most suggestive and important episode in its transmission to us. This book, which was found, was *and is* the only link, through which, at that point in its history, the Pentateuch stands connected with our modern systems of theology. Well might good old Matthew Henry exclaim, in his Commentary on this incident—"If this was the only authentic copy of the Pentateuch then in being, which had, as I may say, so narrow a turn for its life, and was so near

perishing, I wonder the hearts of all good people did not tremble for that sacred treasure, as Eli's for the ark ; and am sure we now have reason to thank God upon our knees for that happy providence, by which Hilki'ah found this book at this time ; found it when he sought it not !”

We are told very particularly when the book was *found* ; but this immediately suggests another most important and interesting question, when was it *lost* ? and unless the clue, which this question supplies, can be successfully followed up, the history of the book must remain incomplete and unsatisfactory. I propose, therefore, in the following chapters, to pursue this line of enquiry, directing attention chiefly to the Scriptural narratives, of the times preceding the discovery. Taking the discovery itself as my starting point, I shall endeavour to prosecute a search backwards, so far as may be found necessary or possible, for any traces in the history which may throw light upon the question as to the time when the book was lost ; or which may seem to account for its production at the time when it is said to have been found.

In endeavouring to present a clear and connected view of the events and characters bearing upon the subject of inquiry, it will suit best to examine the history of Judah alone, hoping that much of the perplexity and confusion may thus be avoided, which must arise from the mixing up of two histories and of two dynasties, (those of Judah and of Israel), and from the alternate introduction of scraps from the one and from the other.

It is superfluous to say, that I have no new discoveries to boast of ; and that my desire and aim is only to arrange and present those materials, with which every reader of the Bible is or ought to be acquainted, in such a manner, as to throw the greatest amount of light upon that event which is the subject of this essay.

CHAPTER II.

SEARCH FOR EVIDENCE OF THE PREVIOUS EXISTENCE,
OR OF THE LOSS OF THE BOOK.

HEZEKIAH TO JOSIAH.—B.C. 726 TO 641.

IN accordance with the plan which has been indicated, our search, for such traces as may be found of the Book which had been lost, is first to be directed to the period which immediately preceded its alleged discovery; commencing with the accession of King Hezekiah, who had been the last predecessor of Josiah in the work of reformation.

Hezekiah's reign began eighty-five years earlier than that of Josiah, or one hundred and three years before the finding of the Book; and he reigned twenty-nine years; so that, between his death and the discovery, there intervened only seventy-four years; and, as that was a long-living time, we may presume that old men heard the reading of the new-found book, who in their youth had witnessed the reforming zeal of Hezekiah. Many, at least, must have been present on the later occasion, who had heard from their fathers all that was most interesting about the good old times. From this consideration, and from the words of King Josiah—

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 21—"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 after all that is written in this book"—

as also from the surprise and dismay with which the very unexpected announcement was received by the king, insomuch that he rent his clothes; there seems to be a *prima facie* probability that, within the comparatively brief and recent period which we are now

considering, we shall fail to find any traces of the Book's previous existence; because, if it had been known and obeyed in the time of Hezekiah, it seems impossible that king, priest, and people should so entirely have lost all knowledge of it in the interval; and Josiah's exclamation implies that, so far as he knew, the fathers of his generation, at least, had known nothing of the Book. It is, however, none the less necessary to examine this period as much as any other; and, even should we fail to find clear traces of the Book, we may fairly expect to notice various things which may be useful in the further prosecution of this inquiry.

It is interesting to observe the difference of tone between the earlier and the later narratives, in the accounts which they respectively give of the reign of Hezekiah; although there is no contradiction, nor any discrepancy, which cannot be easily explained or reconciled.

According to the earlier Book, which, in this part, has much internal evidence of being written by the prophet Isaiah, this was the very first monarch who ventured to remove the high places.

2 KINGS xviii. 4.—“He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days, the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it *Nehushtan* (*a piece of brass*).”

It is rather startling to learn from this passage that Hezekiah was also the first king who entirely put down the worship of images, which would seem to have been only partially accomplished by the reformers of earlier times, who must, at least, have spared the brazen serpent. But he was, notwithstanding his piety and faithfulness, exposed to misfortune; for we learn that he was forced to pay a humiliating tribute to the king of Assyria.

2 KINGS xviii. 13-15.—“Now, in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, did Sennacherib, king of Assyria, come up against all the fenced cities of 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 putttest on me I will bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah, king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king’s house.”

In this narrative, the celebration of the Passover is not mentioned; and, indeed, we have nothing at all about priests or Levites; but many things said and done by the Prophet Isaiah (chap. xix.)

In the later account, the picture has a totally different appearance. Now we find only one incidental notice of Isaiah:—

2 CHRON. xxxii. 20.—“And for this cause Hezekiah, the king, and the Prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven.”

But we have three chapters (xxix., xxx., xxxi.) of purely Levitical matter, with a detailed account of the Passover, which is here mentioned for the *first* time in the whole history.

2 CHRON. xxx. 21, 23, 26.—“And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleaven bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept other seven days with gladness So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for, since the time of Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem.”

We have detailed lists of priests and Levites, with many particular ceremonial observances; and, most notably, we have here a distinct mention of tithes,

which we cannot find in the history of any of the earlier kings :—

2 CHRON. xxxi. 4-6—“Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field, and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly : and concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe, &c.”

In the history of the earlier reigns, we find no mention made of tithes ; from which it would appear that the wealth and bounty of the kings, with the abundance of the sacrifices, had then sufficed for the support of the priesthood ; and the only collections from the people, which are recorded, were for the purpose of building and decorating the temple, and were not for the priests. In the Book of Chronicles the humiliation of Hezekiah is not related, perhaps because such a calamity, to such a pious king, would not harmonize with the historian's idea of the divine government ; but it is very interesting to observe that this more recent history has a modernized version of the miraculous discomfiture of Sennacherib, when that king came a second time against Hezekiah, modified apparently by the information which the scribes of Ezra's time, to whom the authorship of the Books of Chronicles is generally attributed, had derived from Babylon :—

2 CHRON. xxxii. 21.—“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.”

This is one of very few and similar cases in which the later historian seems to be more credible

than the early narrators, when the two authorities differ:—

2 KINGS xix. 35.—“And it came to pass that night that the Angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand, and *when they arose, early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses!*”

In Chronicles, it is not stated, but seems to be assumed and implied that Hezekiah destroyed the images, and removed the high places, as, according to this Book, two former kings had, in their respective times, done; namely, Asa and Jehoshaphat.

We cannot learn from either of the narratives, nor from the prophecy of the earlier Isaiah (Isa. i.—xxxix.), that the Sabbath-day was known or observed at this time; nor the Sabbatical year; nor the jubilee; nor the commandment to write and read the law.

DEUT. xvii. 18—“And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites.”

DEUT. xxxi. 10, 11.—“And Moses commanded them, saying, at the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel, in their hearing.”

The negative proof of this ignorance is as complete as it could possibly be; and positive evidence of such a negation can scarcely be expected. But, with regard to the Sabbath-day, we find something nearly approaching to positive proof, that it was unknown.

2 CHRON. xxix. 16, 17.—“And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found. . . . And the Levites took it to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron.

“Now, they began on the first day of the month to sanctify (cleanse), and on the *eighth* day of the month came

they to the porch of the Lord: so they sanctified (cleansed) the house of the Lord in *eight* days; and, in the sixteenth day of the first month, they made an end."

And there is also some positive evidence, of an indirect kind, that the Sabbatical year was not at this time observed, which in the reign of such a zealous and reforming king implies that the law regarding it was not known.

2 CHRON. xxxvi. 20, 21.—"And them that escaped from the sword carried he away into Babylon, where they were servants 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.

EXOD. xxiii. 10, 11.—"And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still."

The land had to lie desolate for seventy years, to make up for the number of neglected Sabbatical years, so that this neglect is computed by the prophet Jeremiah, as quoted in Chronicles, (in the book of Jeremiah the prediction seems to have no relation to the Sabbatical year, Jer. xxv. 12,) to have lasted for four hundred and ninety years before the time of the captivity, which leads us back to the reign of Saul, the earliest period whence the continuous history is traced: and we must infer that all the good kings, whose piety and zeal are so much extolled, knew nothing about this law, or they could not have so entirely neglected it. (Compare Nehem. viii. 14 and 17.)

1 KINGS xv. 5—"Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from *anything*, that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite."

The computation of Jeremiah receives confirmation

from the fact, that there is not to be found in the whole history of the monarchy any trace of the observance of the Sabbatical year, nor of the reading of the law in that year, which proves, almost to demonstration, that the existence of this law was unknown.

Hezekiah was the third of the four great reformers, of whom Asa had been the first, and Jehoiada the second. Each of the four arose immediately after a period of gross declension; and, in each case, the heat and brightness of the rising sun seems to have been in proportion to the length and darkness of the preceding night. Hezekiah succeeded Ahaz, who had reigned sixteen years; and who had been not only an idolater, but a warlike and vigorous king, and zealous in his heathenish worship.

2 KINGS xvi. 3 — “Yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen.”

And the long suppressed zeal of the orthodox party was most vigorously displayed in the very first year of the new king, who threw himself into the work of reformation with all the ardour of youth.

2 CHRON. xxix. 3 — “He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them,” &c.

Not content with merely returning to the standards of the old reformers, which King Ahaz had set aside, he proceeded to establish innovations, which must have been rather startling in their time; and thus, while the more recent narrative attributes to him the first celebration of the Passover, the earlier emphatically extols him as the first who destroyed *all* the images, and took away the high places.

These two measures would naturally go together, or at least the one must soon have followed as the complement of the other; for, when it was forbidden to worship anywhere except at Jerusalem, it would be

expedient or necessary that some great festival should be instituted, at which the worshippers from all parts of the country might be invited to meet. Let us not forget, as we are apt to do, that the removal of the high places was no mild measure, but one that must have been felt and regarded as harsh in the extreme by those who, residing in places distant from Jerusalem, had never before been thus interdicted from worshipping at the altar which they found in their neighbourhood, as their forefathers had done; and as they might plead that they were justified in doing, by the examples of Samuel, David, and Solomon.

1 SAM. ix. 12—"Behold he (Samuel) is before you: make haste now, for he came to-day to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people to-day in the high place," &c.

1 CHRON. xxi. 25, 26, 29—"So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight, and David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings. . . . For the tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt-offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon."

1 KINGS iii. 3—"And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places."

If we only reflect on some of the hardships which are implied in the total abolition of local worship by the strong arm of the civil power; or, if we try to realise the compulsory operation of such a measure among ourselves, we shall cease to wonder that the worshipping in high places was a sin, if *sin* we are to call it, into which the people were constantly prone to fall back. The new law most probably proceeded, in some degree, from a real desire to maintain purity and uniformity of worship; but was unquestionably also designed to magnify the office, and to increase the emoluments of the temple priesthood.

This reign, we may rest assured, was not a time when the book of the law could in any sense be lost; and, if Hezekiah had such a book, it must, under his

administration, have assumed or resumed such importance in the minds of the people and of the favoured priesthood, that we cannot conceive it possible for all trace and recollection of it to have been lost in the two generations which intervened between his death and the time of the discovery.

Some commentators, however, have tried to solve the difficulty, by assuming that the wicked Manasseh, who succeeded Hezekiah, may probably have caused the suppression of the book ; and, to many superficial readers, this explanation has, doubtless, appeared satisfactory. But Manasseh had seers (probably Nahum and Joel) who seem to have spoken to him fearlessly in the name of God (2 Kings xxi. 10-15) ; and some considerable time before his death, Manasseh repented, turned from his idolatry, prayed to God, and was forgiven.

2 CHRON. xxxiii. 15-17.—“ 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. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel.

“ Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the Lord their God only.”

If Manasseh had been guilty of destroying or of suppressing the book, such guilt must have been known to the outspoken prophets, and to the orthodox priests of his time ; and must have been indignantly denounced, and certainly recorded, as his other crimes, some or all of which were of minor importance, have been. Restitution also would, in that case, have been the first fruits of his repentance, and it cannot be supposed that restitution was impossible, or even that it would be attended with any serious difficulty.

Twenty-three years before the commencement of

Manasseh's reign, Samaria had been taken, after a siege of three years, by Shalmanezzer, king of Assyria, who carried the Israelites away into Assyria, and, instead of them, placed foreigners in the cities of Israel. He did not, however, prevent the Israelites from worshipping according to their conscience, but, on the contrary, sent back a priest from the captivity to Samaria, that he might teach the foreigners located there how to worship the true God.

2 KINGS xvii. 27, 28.—“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 the manner of the God of the land. Then one of the priests, whom they had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the Lord.”—(Compare Ezra iv. 2.)

Even supposing, therefore, that Manasseh had destroyed every copy of the book of the law, on which he could lay his hands, there would still have remained others in Samaria, and among the captive Israelites, which must have been entirely beyond his control; and this would have made restitution easy, when the days of repentance and reaction came.

But of any such suppression or restoration—of any such duty, desire, or intention to restore;—of any such law in the hands of the captives—of the supposed or possible existence of any other copy, besides that which Hilkiah discovered, there is not, in the whole narrative, the remotest hint, nor any trace to be found.

Between the death of the repentant Manasseh, who had reigned fifty-five years, and the accession of Josiah, there intervened only the two years' reign of Amon.

2 CHRON. xxxiii. 22-24.—“But he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord as did Manasseh his father; for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; and humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. And his

servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house."

The warnings and exhortations addressed to Manasseh; the influence which at length brought about his conversion, and his actions which followed thereon; the fate of Amon, and the training of Josiah, are all proofs that the orthodox priesthood, the true prophets, and the faithful worshippers of Jehovah, though oppressed and persecuted, had not been rooted out; nay, the result soon showed that persecution had produced its usual results: had deepened their former convictions, and intensified their former zeal.

Was it in such a time that they, or their children, were likely to lose all knowledge and all memory of the book which they would so highly have prized and revered? Nay, is it not rather certain that, if they had possessed, or had even known of the existence of, such a book, it would in such times as these have been their chief care to treasure and to preserve it, or, if lost, promptly to set about recovering or restoring it among themselves? Would it not have been bequeathed as a sacred trust to their children, as a precious inheritance for the comfort, direction, and encouragement of all the true persecuted Church? And would not Josiah have been from his youth initiated therein by his pious teachers, instead of being left to find it, as if by accident, in the twenty-sixth year of his age and the eighteenth of his reign? And, even supposing that Manasseh had actually destroyed every copy in all Judea, would not the first righteous impulse of the young Josiah, and of those who trained him in the knowledge of God, and who were his advisers, have been to seek by every means in their power to repair such a serious loss, which, as we have already shown, could not have been very difficult?

In Hezekiah's reign, several things may be noticed, which seem to indicate that he must have been ac-

quainted with the book; but there are also many other circumstances and indications which are opposed to that conclusion. If, however, Hezekiah had the book, it must have been left by him in dignity and safety; and we have seen that, between his reign and that of Josiah, it could not have been lost. We are, therefore, forced to conclude that the loss of the book, if loss there were, did not happen during this period, which we have been examining, but must, at least, have taken place before the time of Hezekiah.

The reformation accomplished by Josiah, like all the three preceding reformations of Asa, Jehoiada, and Hezekiah, thus immediately succeeded, and may perhaps be said to have resulted from, a reign of mixed worship and of heresy, which had, in this case been both more gloomy and more lasting, than any of the former dark intervals had been; and, as we have seen that the reforming zeal of young Hezekiah led him to the adoption of bolder measures than those of the old and cautious Jehoiada had been; so also now, when, by the accession of the pious and youthful Josiah, the orthodox priesthood found the pressure removed, and free scope allowed for the recoil of the spring, that recoil was in proportion to what the pressure had been; their zeal went far beyond the zeal of Hezekiah; and, instead of being satisfied with merely restoring what had been gained in the former reformations, they, in a few years, produced and enacted, as derived from heaven, a code of infallible and immutable laws, so very comprehensive and minute, including so very much of everything which, to their sacerdotal minds, appeared most desirable, so hedged round with inviolable sacredness, and with such claims to the sanction of remote antiquity, as to preclude, so far, at least, as priestly foresight could, the desire or the possibility of any further advance in the same direction for all future time. The priesthood which

was typified in Eli and in Samuel, and which was established by Solomon at the opening of the temple, had now developed the wonderful extent of its arrogance and of its claims. The tithes, of which no trace can be found in the history of David, Solomon, or Asa, were, in Jehoiada's time, two hundred and fifty years before the finding of the book, dimly foreshadowed by a contrivance, which has often since then been imitated with more or less success :

2 KINGS xii. 9.—“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.” The temple at that time stood in need of repairs, which the king was desirous should be done without delay :

2 KINGS xii. 4-8.—“And Jehoash said to the priests : All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the Lord, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the Lord, let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance ; and let them 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. Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house ? Now, therefore, receive no more money of your acquaintance, but *deliver it* (what they had already received) for the breaches of the house. And the priests consented to receive no more money of the people, *neither* to repair the breaches of the house.”

So that the priests would seem to have claimed and kept all that, during many years, had been contributed ; and yet were not to do the work for which it had been given ; but they were to receive no more, except

2 KINGS xii. 16.—“The trespass-money and the sin-money was not brought into the house of the Lord : it was the priests'.”

Here it is evident that the contributions of the people were chiefly voluntary, and not at all in the form of tithes; and it also appears that the priests were at that time dissatisfied with their allowances, which they sought to increase by questionable means.

In Hezekiah's time, as we have seen (p. 27), according to the narrative in Chronicles, the provision for the priests is *called* the tithes; but the language employed seems to indicate rather a discretionary and semi-voluntary contribution, than a regular impost of the tenth part; and this view is supported by the subsequent context:

2 CHRON. xxxi. 14, 15.—“And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, was over the *free-will offerings* of God, to distribute the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things. And next him were Eden (and six others named) in the cities of the priests, in their set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small.”

That these contributions were voluntary, is further confirmed by the silence of the earlier historian (2 Kings xviii.), who, though not caring to write about Levitical matters, would certainly not have omitted to notice the institution, or the restoration, of such an important tax as the tithe. We may therefore, with tolerable certainty, infer that, while Hezekiah made some provision for the priesthood, more liberal and more regular than that which had been made in Jehoiada's time, it was left for Hilkiah and Josiah, at the time of their great discovery, to place the matter on a thoroughly satisfactory and permanent footing, by what would, in our days, be called the “Tithes Consolidation Bill.”

LEV. xxvii. 30-33.—“And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And, concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod,

the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it; and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy: it shall not be redeemed."

NUM. xviii. 21.—"And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for the service which they serve."

The violent innovations of Hezekiah for the abolition of all local worship, heresy, and nonconformity, were restored by Josiah with far more than their original force.

DEUT. xii. 13, 14.—"Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee."

LEV. xvii. 8, 9.—"Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the Lord, even that man shall be cut off from among his people."

And instead of the one great festival which was celebrated in Hezekiah's time, the law was now to be—

DEUT. xvi. 16, 17.—"Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God, which he hath given thee."

So absolutely unfettered by any restraint were the sacerdotal party under Josiah, that, not content with the enforcement of such practical measures as these, they felt themselves at liberty to enact a thousand and one other things of a vexatious and oppressive kind, some of which were so absurd and unpractical, that we may wonder whether they ever were observed at

all; as, for example, the Sabbatical year, which has already been noticed in this chapter. Of this intolerable legislation, no words can convey a more concise and pithy denunciation than those of the Apostle Peter:—

ACTS xv. 10.—“Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”

We need not wonder so very much at the reception of the book. When the priests and the king had resolved on its enactment, the matter was settled. Of course it contained much which the people already knew or believed to be correct. Most of its leading features must have had some sort of foundation, or at least of germ, in the customs and traditions of the nation; and for the rest, we must remember that in those days, and for ages afterwards, both priests and people were very innocent in the matter of criticism, as now understood, and that the people had not, as we have, the book in their hands, but only had it read in their hearing. Nor must we forget to consider how very vague and superstitious were the notions of Divine inspiration which prevailed in those early days, when we find the more recent historian writing as follows:—

2 CHRON. xxxv. 20-22.—“After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish 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; for God 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 Necho from the mouth of God.”

If Josiah's death, and the non-fulfilment of Huldah's

prophecy regarding his peaceful end are thus regarded as a judgment on him, for refusing to listen to the words of a heathen king "*from the mouth of God*;" how shall we wonder that the "book of the law of the Lord," which Hilkiah the priest produced, which was vouched for by Huldah the prophetess, and then acknowledged by the king, was received by the people with entire submission to the high authority which its authors assumed for it?

CHAPTER III.

SEARCH CONTINUED.

JEHOIADA TO HEZEKIAH.—B.C. 878 TO 726.

CONTINUING our search backwards, the next period which we come to examine is that which immediately preceded the accession of Hezekiah, and which we shall regard as commencing with the reformation effected under the powerful, zealous, and orthodox priest-regent, Jehoiada, in whose hands the civil and ecclesiastical authorities were united, for the first time since the days of Samuel, having been seized by him, after a successful conspiracy, and the assassination of Queen Athaliah; thus clearing the way for young Joash (or Jehoash), the rightful surviving heir, then only seven years of age, who had been reared secretly in the temple, and who now ascended the throne under the tutelage of his guardian, the great priest.

2 KINGS xi. 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."

2 CHRON. xxiv. 2, 3.—And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, all the days of Jehoiada the

priest. And *Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters.*"

2 CHRON. xxiii. 18.—"Also *Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the Lord, by 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, as it was ordained by David.*"

Here we find several things which seem to imply that *Jehoiada* must have had the book of the law, if the language does not directly assert that he had; but, then, how can we reconcile this with the statement of the earlier historian?

2 KINGS xii. 2, 3.—"And *Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, all his days, wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.*"

Did the zealous *Jehoiada* knowingly and wilfully transgress, or suffer others openly to transgress, the laws regarding high places, which we have quoted in the foregoing chapter (p. 38), the observance of which was afterwards to be regarded as one of the chief tests of orthodoxy, and the neglect of which was to be recorded as a grave reproach against him and others? Had he never read, in the book of *Joshua*, the story of *Reuben, Gad*, and the half tribe of *Manasseh*, in whom the mere appearance or suspicion of transgressing this great law was, according to the narrative, sufficient to rouse the pious indignation of all *Judah*?

JOSEPH. xxii. 29.—"God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt-offerings, for meat-offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the Lord our God, that is before his tabernacle."

Deliberate transgression, and wilful neglect of God's law in this particular, would be quite opposed to the

piety and zeal which are ascribed to this reformer ; and thus we are forced to conclude that he had no knowledge of such a law.

Jehoiada, or his pupil-king, repaired the temple, reorganized the priesthood, and renewed the covenant to worship God alone ; but his reformation fell short of Hezekiah's in two most important respects, the removal of the high places, and the institution of the Passover ; of which latter we find no trace at this, nor at any earlier historic time ; and the same may be said of the observance of the Sabbath-day, the Sabbatical year, the public reading of the law, &c.

We learn very clearly, from both narratives, that in Jehoiada's time the power of the priesthood was greatly increased or restored, and that he did his part wisely and well, living to a very great age, and thus contributing his full share to the elevation and establishment of his own order, while probably adding not a little to the fabric of Levitical law.

2 CHRON. xxiv. 15, 16.—“But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full of days when he died ; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.”

But, being an old man before he came to power, he seems to have ventured on no such startling innovations as those which were afterwards introduced by Hezekiah and Josiah. From the narrative in Kings, we may infer that he was desirous to secure a larger and more regular provision for the priesthood ; in which, however, he seems to have been only partially successful ; and, certainly, fell far short of establishing anything like the tithe-law (p. 36).

King Joash reigned forty years, living twenty years after the death of Jehoiada.

2 CHRON. xxiv. 17, 18.—“Now after the death of Jehoiada, came the princes of Judah and made obeisance to the king : then the king hearkened unto them. And they left the house

of the Lord God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass."

The earlier narrative relates the calamity, but not the sin; and, on the death of Joash, we read:—

2 KINGS xii. 21.—"And they buried him *with his fathers* in the city of David."

Whereas the later historian says:—

2 CHRON. xxiv. 25.—"And they buried him in the city of David; but they buried him *not* in the sepulchre of the kings."

Although the law of Moses is mentioned by the later authority as the rule which guided Jehoiada and Jehoash in their restoration of the orthodox worship, we have found, on the other hand, much evidence that they did not possess the book of the law, as it afterwards came to be known; but, at all events, if they did possess it, we are not at liberty to suppose that it was suppressed or destroyed in their time, whatever the sins of Jehoash may have been; because we find it again referred to as a rule of conduct in connection with his successor, Amaziah, in a passage which is nearly the same in both narratives.

"2 KINGS xiv. 5, 6; 2 CHRON. xxv. 3, 4.—And it came to pass, as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, that he slew his servants, which had slain the king his father; but the children of the murderers he slew not; according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein 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; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin (Deut. xxiv. 16)."

In Chronicles, this passage may be regarded as containing a moral reflection or paraphrase, by the comparatively recent historian; and, in Kings, as an interpolation from the later narrative. That it is an anachronism, as applied to Amaziah, can easily be

shown, inasmuch as it attributes to him a higher standard of morality than was known in his days; and, for which, at that period, we look in vain, even where we should most expect to find it fully displayed.

The account of the divine appointment of Jehu, to destroy the family of Ahab, may be taken as a good illustration of the real lowness of moral sentiment which prevailed in those days.

We read (2 Kings ix.), that Elisha the prophet sent one of the sons of the prophets to go to Jehu, who was one of the chief captains of the army of Joram, son of Ahab king of Israel, and the young prophet delivered his message thus:—

2 KINGS ix. 6, 7.—“He poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy Master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord.”

In the following chapter we have some details of the manner in which Jehu proceeded to carry out the prophet's instructions:—

2 KINGS x. 1.—“And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria, and Jehu wrote letters and sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab's children.”

The first letters were not explicit; but, when obedience had been promised, his further instructions were plain enough, and were promptly carried out:—

2 KINGS x. 6, 7.—“Now the king's sons, being seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, *which brought them up*. And it came to pass when the letters came to them, that they took the king's sons and slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jezreel.”

The first idea suggested by this is one of indignation against Jehu, for so horribly misinterpreting and

exceeding the instructions which he had received ; but we are compelled to abandon this view :—

2 KINGS x. 30.—“ 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 children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.”

While the massacre of so many young persons and children, for the sins of others, was thus regarded as right in the eyes of God ; it is impossible to believe that the more humane law was known, by which Amaziah is said to have been guided.

If he had really merited praise for the respect shown by him to the law, we should certainly have had some further and fuller proof of it :—

2 KINGS xiv. 4.—“ Howbeit the high places were not taken away ; as yet the people did sacrifice and burn incense on the high places.”

The very special importance assigned by the historians to this matter of the high places, and the scarcity or absence of other criteria, force us to regard it as the great comparative test of orthodoxy ; and Amaziah's failure on this point, with the negative proof of silence that he knew nothing of the passover, of the Sabbath-day, nor of the tithe-law, must be sufficient to make us doubt whether he really had the book of the law of Moses ; even although we are told that his leniency in punishing crime was dictated by his obedience to that book. But, though we cannot be sure that Amaziah had the book, we may be quite sure that it was not lost in his time ; and that, if he possessed it, it was by him safely bequeathed, after he had reigned twenty-nine years, to his son Uzziah or Azariah, who succeeded him :—

2 KINGS xv. 3, 4.—“ And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done ; save that the high places were not re-

moved: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places."

Uzziah's wealth and prosperity and success in war, are described in fulsome terms by the historian in Chronicles (xxvi.); but only serve to magnify the humiliation to which he had to submit, when he presumed to usurp the priests' office by entering the temple, himself to offer sacrifice:—

2 CHRON. xxvi. 16-18.—"But when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men. And they withstood Uzziah the king and said unto him, It appertaineth 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 thou hast trespassed."

Uzziah was wroth, and persisted in his purpose; but was humbled and set aside, being miraculously smitten with leprosy. So great had the power and arrogance of the priests become under the fostering influence of royal favour, which they had now for a century enjoyed.

What would have become of the priest who should have ventured so to oppose David when he assumed the priest's dress and the priest's office?

2 SAM. vi. 13, 14.—"And it was so that, when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he (David) sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod."

If any one, at that time, had said, 'It appertaineth not unto thee, David,' there can be little doubt that his blood would have been upon his own head.

The good priest-ridden king Uzziah, after a long reign of fifty-two years, was succeeded by his son Jotham.

2 CHRON. xxvii. 2.—“ And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Uzziah did : howbeit he entered not into the temple of the Lord. And the people did yet corruptly.”

It is clear that he was not allowed to forget the lesson which had been so firmly taught to his father, and that in his days the hierarchy were not to be trifled with ; but we are not, on this account, to infer that Jotham was a weak prince.

2 CHRON. xxvii. 6.—“ So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.”

Strange, that up to Jotham's time, and even then, when the priesthood had so long been in possession of power, and when the kings did that which was right, at least so far as they knew, there is not any recorded celebration of the Passover, but, on the contrary, we read :—

2 KINGS xv. 34 and 35.—“ And he (Jotham) did that which was right in the sight of the Lord : he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. Howbeit the high places were not removed ; the people sacrificed and burnt incense still in the high places.”

Jotham is the *last* of the good or orthodox kings, against whom this reproach is recorded, under which *all* his predecessors, without exception, lie ; and when we consider the amount of reforming zeal, and of priestly power, often manifested in Jotham's and in earlier reigns, we are forced to conclude that the worship in high places which had all along been practised and tolerated, was not known to be sinful, and that those kings and priests were not acquainted with the law, by which all local worship was afterwards suppressed as intolerable heresy.

After reigning sixteen years Jotham died, leaving the priesthood, we cannot doubt, in a condition of power and of prosperity, which, for a time at least, must have ensured for them toleration under the new king Ahaz, who is represented as an idolater.

2 KINGS xvi. 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.”

2 CHRON. xxviii. 25.—“And in every several city of Judah, he made high places to burn incense *unto other gods*; and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers.”

Isaiah, his contemporary and survivor, accuses him only of want of faith in God, which the prophet sought to stimulate.

ISAIAH vii. 10-12.—“Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above. But Ahaz answered, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.”

And, though noticing many prevailing sins, Isaiah nowhere mentions nor alludes to the sacrifice of children, as a crime existing in his days,

But however much Ahaz himself may have sinned, there is nothing recorded either by the historians or by the prophet which can warrant us in supposing him guilty of persecuting the orthodox worshippers, or of suppressing or destroying the book of the law.

We learn that some of the priests were willing to share in his irregular worship.

2 KINGS xvi. 11, 12.—“And Urijah the priest built an altar, according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus. . . . And, when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.”

But this incident, being a reproach against the priesthood, is not noticed in the Book of Chronicles, while for Ahaz himself the chronicler has no such tenderness, exhibiting him in a much worse light than does the historian in Kings.

2 KINGS xvi. 7-9.—“Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pilezer, 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 to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him : for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin."

whereas, in the later narrative, we read :—

2 CHRON. xxviii. 20, 21.—“ And Tilgath-pilnezer, king of 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, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him *not*.”

And the discrepancy between the two reports of his burial exhibits the *same bias* on the part of the Chronicler.

2 KINGS xvi. 20.—“ And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried *with his fathers* in the city of David.”

2 CHRON. xxviii. 27.—“ And Ahaz slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him *not* into the sepulchres of the kings of *Israel*.”

After reigning sixteen years, Ahaz was succeeded by his son Hezekiah, who, in his very first year, proceeded to inaugurate the third great reformation of the Jewish worship, so that he must have been previously educated thereto by orthodox instructors; and this consideration, taken along with the absence of intolerance, persecution, or suppression, either implied or recorded during the preceding reign, completely excludes the idea that the loss of the book of the law may be attributed to King Ahaz; and we may therefore be certain that it was not lost during the period which in this chapter we have examined.

We have, however, discerned somewhat of the growth of the claims, the arrogance, and the intolerance of the temple priests, ripening for the notable and definite advance which they were now about to achieve under Hezekiah, and only the more stimulated

by their sixteen years' exclusion from the favour and support of the civil power during the reign of the idolatrous Ahaz; stimulated both by their zeal for the worship of Jehovah, and by their jealousy for the sacred privileges and the prosperity of their own order;—which two strangely mingled motives may, and ought to, be recognised in every step of their history.

CHAPTER IV.

SEARCH CONTINUED.

ASA TO JEHOIADA.—B.C. 955 TO 878.

AS the two periods of time, which we have already examined, commenced each with a national reformation and a renewal of the national covenant; so the third period, which in the course of our search for traces of the existence, or of the loss, of the book, we now come to consider, shall be regarded as commencing with the *first* reformation and the *first* covenant, of which we have any account in the historic books.

King Asa succeeded Abijah, the grandson of Solomon, and, like all the other reformers, he came after a period of heresy and idolatry. It does not appear that, in the preceding reigns, the worship of Jehovah had ever been suppressed or abandoned; but the laxity of mixed worship, which Solomon in his old age had encouraged, had been continued by his successors. Yet, though latitudinarianism and general toleration had prevailed, there is no evidence that the temple itself, or the temple priesthood, had up to this time been polluted with the worship of other gods; as they afterwards were, in the reigns of Ahaz and of Manasseh. The high places and altars which Solomon had built for various heathen gods, (1 Kings xi. 6-8), were allowed to stand, and whoso would might wor-

ship there ; but such heathen worship was not allowed to usurp the altars of Jehovah, for, in the time of Rehoboam, we read that, when the idolatrous king of Israel, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had cast off the Levites in his dominions from their office of priests unto the Lord, they left their possessions, and came to Jerusalem.

2 CHRON. xi. 16 — “ And, after them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers.

So that the liberty of worshipping according to conscience, which, in the neighbouring kingdom of Israel was denied, seems to have been extended, in the kingdom of Judah, to all religions alike ; and this was the state of matters, so far as can be known, up to the time of King Asa.

1 KINGS xv. 11, 12, 14 — “ And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. And he took away the Sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. . . . But the high places were not removed ; nevertheless Asa’s heart was perfect with the Lord all his days.”

Regarding the high places, we must in this case accept the testimony of the earlier historian in preference to that of the writer of the Chronicles, because the latter contradicts himself.

2 CHRON. xiv. 2 and 3 — “ And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God : for he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves.”

2 CHRON. xv. 17 — “ But the high places were *not* taken away out of Israel : nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.”

Although the authorities thus differ as to Asa’s removal of the high places, and although we can, almost with certainty, discern that they were not removed till the reign of Hezekiah, when, *for the first*

time, the earlier book relates their removal; yet it is here very worthy of notice, that both our authorities agree in attributing to Asa the destruction of images, and the abolition of idol-worship; and that Asa is the *first* king to whom this merit is ascribed. But we must remember that there was at least one image, which even Asa spared, and whose worship still continued.

2 KINGS xviii. 4.—“Hezekiah brake in pieces the brazen serpent, which Moses had made: for, *unto those days*, the children of Israel did burn incense to it.”

The worship of the serpent, being in some way or other, connected with the worship of Jehovah, was not interfered with, while the altars and images of other gods were destroyed. From the brief narratives of Asa's long reign, we learn that he was a warlike, and, on the whole, a prosperous king; who ruled his subjects with a vigorous and somewhat despotic sway. So far as can be ascertained from either history, there had hitherto, all along been some degree of toleration for the differences of religion; but Asa seems to have despised such weakness; and to have resolved that all his subjects should be converted, whether they would or not.

2 CHRON. xiv. 4, 5.—“And he (Asa) *commanded* Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment. Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah, the high places and the images; and the kingdom was quiet before him.”

And, being not only strong in purpose, but filled with energy and zeal for the orthodox worship,

2 CHRON. xv. 12-14.—“They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart, and with all their soul; that *whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death*, whether small or great, whether man or woman. And they sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.”

This is the first *National Covenant* of which we read

in either of the histories. There may have been covenants in the wilderness five hundred years earlier, as we are told in the Pentateuch; but it may also be that covenants are so often described in the book of the law, just because that book was composed, or compiled, in the later covenanting times; and this view is strongly confirmed by the terms of some of those Mosaic covenants; in Jacob's, for example, one great feature is:—

GEN. xxviii. 22.—“And of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give *the tenth* unto thee.”

Here we have, apparently, a very ancient sanction for the institution of tithes, of which, however, we have been able to trace the germ and the growth under Jehoiada, Hézekiah, and Josiah; and of which, in the time of Asa or his predecessors, no trace is to be found.

At all events, this is the first time, *since the tribes became a nation*, that we have any record of the people entering into a covenant with the Lord—of the nation becoming a church: and it is strangely interesting to observe, that the national covenant of those ancient Jews produced, (or was produced by?) the same spirit of intolerance and notion of infallibility, as the national covenants of our own Scottish reformers. Of this, it would be easy to find ample historical illustration, but it is not even necessary to refer to history, for we have the illustration as clear and full, in the present day, as it was in the days of Asa, only that happily the modern Asas cannot enforce their doctrines with pains and penalties, as the ancient Asas did.

The “Original Secession Church” is a small, but very zealous body of Scotch Presbyterians; still maintaining the permanent obligation of the national covenants, which they from time to time renew; and rigidly adhering to the doctrinal standards of the old Covenanters.

From the *Original Secession Magazine* for January 1869, page 37, I quote the following extract of an address delivered by a professor of theology, to the students preparing for the ministry, and attending the "Divinity Hall," in connection with that Church. "By our profession of faith in His Word, we solemnly declare to the world that God himself is a participator in our views and sentiments, that these are derived from Him, and express His mind, and that He is of the same judgment with ourselves, in attaching importance to what we adhere to, and in lightly esteeming what we regard with indifference. In a word, our profession of faith must be regarded, not only as *our declaration* of our own sentiments, but also *of the mind of God.*"

The only recorded fruit of Asa's religious zeal, being the inauguration of intolerance, and the summary extirpation of all heresy by the civil power, we are very doubtful, whether such a change ought to be styled a *reformation*; and it has only been after much hesitation, that we have felt constrained to rank Asa as the first great *reformer* of the Jewish faith;—constrained by the reflection, that so many great reformers, to whom the title cannot be denied, have unhappily been intolerant and persecutors.

Asa is the earliest persecutor, on account of either true or false religion, with whom we become acquainted in the historic books of the Bible. Perhaps he had a clearer and more intense conviction of God's unity and omnipresence, than any of his predecessors had enjoyed; and he acted according to his light, he put forth all his strength in furtherance of the cause of truth. Perhaps his own mind was so filled with the great truth that God is One,—he had so thoroughly cast out the idea that there could be any other gods, that he could not admit, and would not tolerate, the

right of any other mind to entertain that idea, or to recognise either more or other gods than Jehovah.

PSALM lxxv. 2.—“O thou that hearest prayer! unto thee shall all flesh come.”

Or was it only that he was so penetrated and possessed with the conviction, that Jehovah far excelled all other gods in majesty and power, that it was better to worship him than any other?

PSALM lxxxii. 1.—“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods.”

Or was it only that Jehovah was *the* God, whom his chosen people, the Jews, ought to worship, while the other nations, whose God he was not, might do well to worship the gods whom they knew?

JUDGES xi. 24.—“Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy God giveth thee to possess? So, whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive from out before us, them we will possess.”

Whatever may have been the measure of truth, which Asa was enabled to discern, it is clear that he discerned it as *the truth*; and so forcibly, that he felt constrained to exert all his energy and zeal, in the destruction of the opposite falsehood. In Asa's days, the sword of the civil power was the most handy and efficacious instrument of conversion, its arguments not being easily resisted; and so Asa employed the sword, probably with as good a conscience, and in as good a cause, as it ever has been employed by any teacher of religion; but can it be, that the interests of true religion have ever been really and truly promoted by the use of persecuting power? Must we not rather believe that, in all cases, judging of what *might have been*, by comparison with what has in later times been witnessed, the immediate gain, however great apparently it was, could not fail to be far more than counterbalanced by the deeper and more permanent loss; and that the weapons of truth alone, if left and employed to do their own work, would, in Asa's,

and in every time, have sufficed to achieve conquests far more glorious, than the conversion of nations by the sword?

In the earlier part of the history, we read of contentions between a proud priest and a king, in the persons of Samuel and Saul; but, in those days, though there were priests, there was no established *priesthood*, and there is no trace of intolerance. The right to differ, being a natural right, seems to have been generally respected, though perhaps not formally recognised. Saul, David, and Solomon were not over-scrupulous about putting men to death. All their *enemies* were regarded as enemies of their God, and were to be exterminated without mercy; but we cannot learn, that they ever thought of killing their *friends* and fellow-countrymen, merely because their religious beliefs were wrong; much less did they ever make a covenant or law, to the effect that all heretics should surely be put to death. But, when Asa reigned, the temple had been open for fifty years, and the priests of the temple, being an established hierarchy, had, in that time, already developed somewhat of the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church, which, in all its varied forms, and everywhere, and always, has produced intolerance and persecutions great or small; and, while, in Asa's reign, this notion of infallibility already produced the covenant of intolerance, it is three hundred years later, in the production of Hilkiah the priest,—in the book which he read to king Josiah, that we find the legitimate outcome of the growth of this priestly doctrine, whose influence and power have never, from that time to this, ceased to be felt; whether for good or evil,—who shall say?

Who can tell, how much further or more rapidly the progressive development of spiritual truth and the freedom and power of individual thought might have advanced, if their progress, which seems to have been so far true, had not been thus early checked, by

the counter-progress of intolerance and of submission to authority,—had not been, so very soon, arrested in its promising career, by the haste of the priesthood to re-cast all that they discerned, or believed, or desired to be truth, in the iron mould of infallibility ; from which, by the device and authority of Asas, Hilkiahs, and Josiahs, the strange mixture issued, and strangely has continued to issue, stamped as the word of God ?

Rabbinism, phariseeism, and worship of the letter, dogmatism, formality, intolerance, and fanaticism have, in various times, and in many different forms, been the direct and immediate fruit of that same iron mould, of which also irreligion, hatred and indifference to all truth have been the secondary, but no less certain and natural consequences.

Without that iron mould, God alone knows what might have been ! I dare not attempt to paint in words the bright picture which rises before my imagination. Perhaps those who dwell here a thousand years hence may see it realised !

But then,—perhaps the way by which we have been led may also have been the best or only way, by which mankind could ultimately be brought to the knowledge and discernment of good and evil. So many evil things have been made the sources of good, so altogether incapable are we of reckoning a distant result, the means are often so very different, unlike and remote from the ends, that we can only again exclaim—Who can tell ? God alone knows what might have been ; but let us beware of knowingly and wilfully continuing in evil, even in order that good may come.

Asa, the first orthodox persecutor, after reigning forty-one years, was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat, the first missionary king.

2 CHRON. xvii. 7-9.—“ In the third year of his reign he sent to his princes (five names) to teach in the cities of Judah ; and with them he sent Levites (nine names) ; and

with them Eli-shama and Jehoram, priests. And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people."

After being converted by the sword, the people had to be taught by the Levites and *the book*. Here at length we seem to have found it; but then, what of the brazen serpent and the second commandment? what of the passover, the Sabbath day, the Sabbatical year, the public reading of the law in that year, and the tithes? Not a word about any of these in the reign of Jehoshaphat! And what of the high places?

2 CHRON. xvii. 6.—"And his (Jehoshaphat's) heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord: moreover, he took away the high places and groves out of Judah."

But, alas! the same book again contradicts itself, and is contradicted by the more trustworthy history.

2 CHRON. xx. 32, 33.—"And he (Jehoshaphat) walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord: howbeit the high places were *not* taken away; for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers."

1 KINGS xxii. 43.—"And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord: nevertheless the high places were *not* taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places."

It is impossible to believe the later narrative in preference to that earlier authority, which *consistently and uniformly* declares that the high places were not removed until the reign of Hezekiah; whereas, according to the Chronicles, they were removed by nearly every orthodox king. But, though the practise of local worship was still tolerated in the days of Asa and Jehoshaphat, and was not prohibited till two hundred years later; we may be sure that in those very orthodox and intolerant times the wor-

ship in the high places was the worship of Jehovah alone, as it was in the days of Manasseh after his repentance.

2 CHRON. xxxiii. 17.—“The people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the Lord their God only.”

We cannot suppose that such irregularities would have been tolerated by these zealous and covenanted reformers, or that so many great ordinances of the law would by them have been ignored, if they had been in possession of the Pentateuch, as Josiah has transmitted it to us. It would, therefore, appear that the book which the missionaries of Jehoshaphat are said to have had, must have been, in these points at least, and probably in many others, different from that which was produced by Hilkiah.

In connection with Jehoshaphat, an incident is recorded which, whether or not intended to be received as a literal fact, curiously displays the then prevailing notions of the moral character of God.

1 KINGS xxii. 10, 12, 19-22.—“The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah sat each on his throne . . . at the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them . . . saying, Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the Lord shall deliver it into the king's hand. . . . Micaiah said: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? . . . And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him: and the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets: And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth and do so.”

Jehoshaphat reigned well and prosperously for twenty-five years, and then lived four years after giving up the kingdom to Joram (or Jehoram) his son, with whom commenced that period of idolatrous

backsliding which preceded and rendered necessary the second reformation under Jehoiada.

2 KINGS viii. 18.—“And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab, for the daughter of Ahab (Athaliah) was his wife; and he did evil in the sight of the Lord.”

He reigned only eight years, during the two last of which he laboured under a severe and incurable disease.

2 KINGS viii. 24.—“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.”

In the other account of his burial, there is a discrepancy, similar to that which we have in last chapter, observed in the accounts of the burials of Ahaz and of Joash.

2 CHRON. xxi. 20.—“Howbeit they buried him (Joram) in the city of David, but *not* in the sepulchres of the kings.”

Joram was succeeded by his youngest son, Ahaziah, who also preferred his mother's religion. When he had reigned only one year, he went to visit his near relative, the king of Israel, at Samaria, and, while there, was overtaken and included in the vengeance which Jehu was commissioned to inflict on all the house of Ahab.

2 KINGS ix. 27, 28.—“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 did so, at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and 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.*”

But again the chronicler refuses to assign such honour to the remains of an idolatrous king, and gives a different account of the circumstances of his death.

2 CHRON. xxii. 9.—“And Jehu sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, for he was hid in Samaria, and brought him to Jehu: and, when they had slain him, they buried him: because, said they, He is the son of Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart.”

So that the heretic king is not only denied his own place in the sepulchre of his fathers, but is represented as indebted for even a grave in Samaria to the memory of his grandfather, the orthodox Jehoshaphat.

It is very observable and worthy of notice, that in such discrepancies between the two authorities the same orthodox or sacerdotal bias may always be remarked in the book of Chronicles, and may be traced in every page of that book; so much so, that we may see in the constant manifestation of it a record, and a very specimen of the bigotry of the Levitical mind, with which our consideration of this subject thus brings us literally into converse and contact.

2 CHRON. xxii. 10-12.—“But 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 from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. 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.

Athaliah thought she had obtained secure possession of the throne; but she reckoned without the wise old man who had for many years been at the head of the priesthood, who had grown with its growth, and who could remember the glorious days of Solomon, before the kingdom was divided; who had lived in the covenanting times of King Asa, and in whose heart the faithful zeal of that covenant still burned.

The only things recorded about Queen Athaliah, are her bloody usurpation, and its sudden end, after six

years, when she was assassinated by conspirators, who were instigated and directed by Jehoiada the priest.

2 CHRON. xxiii. 14, 15.—“The priest said, Slay her not in the house of God. So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse-gate by the king’s house, they slew her there.”

True to his old covenant, Jehoiada’s first care, on finding himself at the head of the government, was to have it then forthwith renewed by king, priests, and people.

2 CHRON. xxiii. 16, 17.—“And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the Lord’s people. Then 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 the priest of Baal before the altars.”

Here we have plainly the same old covenant of intolerance and persecution, which seems to have been again renewed by Hezekiah, and yet again by Josiah.

2 CHRON. xxix. 10.—“(Hezekiah said), Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.”

2 CHRON. xxxiv. 31, 32.—“And the king (Josiah) 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 which are written in this book: and he caused all that were present 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.”

Jehoiada’s zeal for the covenant, and the fidelity and prudence which he displayed in preserving alive and concealing the young king, and in finally restoring him to the throne of his fathers, are sure pledges that he had not suffered the lamp of truth to be extinguished in his hands, and that the book of the law of the Lord was not lost in his time; but we have, on the other hand, seen that such germs of the book as may then

have existed did, in this period, first receive the stamp of infallibility, the whole nation having been compelled, ostensibly at least, to surrender the right of private judgment, and to submit their understandings and their consciences to the predominant power and authority of the orthodox covenanters. Under such sovereigns as Asa and Jehoshaphat, the reign of absolute intolerance would, of course, give to the whole nation an outward semblance of religious conformity; but that same intolerance most probably was the principal cause of the subsequent backslidings. Tending ever to become more stringent and more arrogant the longer it was cherished, it resulted in provoking multitudes to throw off the restraints which they could no longer bear, as Joram the son of Jehoshaphat did, and as did Jehoiada's pupil-king so soon as his preceptor was dead.

CHAPTER V.

SEARCH CONTINUED.

SOLOMON TO ASA.—B.C. 1015 TO 955.

HAVING now considered the three periods of time, which respectively followed the three reformations under Asa, Jehoiada, and Hezekiah, taking, in each chapter, a step further back from the finding of the book, whose loss we seek to trace, or whose production we must endeavour to explain; we find that the next preceding period, which presents itself for examination, is that which reaches from the building of the temple, or from the accession of Solomon, till the first reformation under Asa.

The earlier narrative records the opposition, which

the succession of Solomon to the throne encountered from his elder brother Adonijah (1 Kings i., ii.), whom Abiathar the priest, and Joab, the veteran commander of the forces to David, supported as the rightful heir; but Solomon, being the son of the favourite Bathsheba, was preferred.

1 KINGS i. 30, 31.—“. . . Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me. . . Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.” (Compare Deut. xxi. 15, 16.)

And Solomon was no sooner established in power than, notwithstanding his promised protection, he put to death Adonijah, with Abiathar and Joab, who had been the two most tried and faithful friends of his father David.

1 KINGS ii. 35.—“ And the king put Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada in his (Joab's) room over the host; and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar.”

Thus asserting his ecclesiastical supremacy in the most unmistakable way.

All the priests, Levites, and musicians, had been, according to the later narrative, arranged and appointed to their several offices in the temple-service by David (1 Chron. xxiv.—xxvii.), while the book of Kings gives no account of these appointments at all; but, from it, we learn that all this multitude of nominations for the temple-service, if made by David, must have preceded the opening of the temple by *at least* eleven years.

1 KINGS vi. 38.—“ In the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it.”

We may therefore regard these Levitical lists as apocryphal, such minute attention to ecclesiastical details being quite opposed to the character of David, as we shall have occasion to see in our next chapter.

The absence from these lists of all notice of provision for the support of the extensive sacerdotal establishment, is perhaps another argument against their trustworthiness, such provision being, by the same historian, specially noted for the comparatively small number of priests in the time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxi. 10-19). It is indeed very remarkable that we have not a hint nor a trace of the tithe-law in connection with Solomon's reign. Probably the numbers and arrangements of the priesthood were nothing like so great nor so complete as the chronicler represents them to have been; but, whatever their real numbers were, it would appear that the multitude of sacrifices and the vast revenues of the king, from tribute, commerce, and accumulated wealth, were at this time sufficient to preclude the necessity of tithes for the priests.

1 KINGS x. 14, 15.—“Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold (equal to £3,646,350 sterling); beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.” (Read also 1 Chron. xxvi. 26-28.)

When at length the building of the temple was completed, the ark was brought up from the city of David, and set in its place.

2 CHRON. v. 7.—“And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims.”

If we assume that *the book* had a previous existence, we must surely expect to find here, if anywhere, unmistakable evidence of it. Now was the time when the book should have been found, which Moses wrote, and concerning which he commanded the Levites saying:—

DEUT. xxxi. 26.—“Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.”

But, for this great discovery the times were not yet ripe: and so we have to read:—

1 KINGS viii. 9.—“There was *nothing* in the ark, save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.” (Deut. x. 3-5.)

If the reader will compare Exod. xxxiv. and Exod. xxiii. 10-19, he will find reason to doubt whether the commandments on these tables were the same as our decalogue; and this doubt is confirmed by the fact that not until the reign of Asa, the third king after Solomon, is there any record of idol-worship being abolished, or of images being destroyed; and that even Asa seems to have gone no further than the destruction of the idols and images pertaining to the worship of *other gods*, while the brazen serpent at least, but probably also other Jehovistic symbols, continued to be worshipped till the time of Hezekiah.

2 KINGS xviii. 4, 5.—“He (Hezekiah) removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for *unto those days* the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it *Nehushtan* (a piece of brass!) He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, *nor any that were before him.*”

From which the unavoidable inference is, in the absence of all evidence to the contrary, that Solomon, even while worshipping Jehovah alone, saw no reason why he should not be worshipped by images, whether these were the ark, the cherubim, or the serpent.

1 KINGS viii. 7.—“For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above.” (See page 87.)

Clearly the second commandment was, in those

days, either different or differently understood, from what it afterwards became.

Having thus not taken, or not fully achieved, the first great step towards purity of worship, it is not surprising to find that, even while his intentions were good, he failed in many points of the law, as in later times it came to be known.

1 KINGS iii. 1, 3, 4.—“And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh’s daughter. (Comp. Deut. vii. 3.) And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place.”

But it has already been abundantly proved that the sin of worshipping God, anywhere in his great temple of the universe, was a sin not then known;—not invented till, in the course of centuries, the priesthood which Solomon established had developed much of the dogmatism, intolerance, selfishness, and arrogance which, unhappily, seem to have been the snares, the misfortunes, and the sins of every priesthood from that time to this. Nor need it be very surprising to discover that, as his ideas of spiritual worship were so imperfect, his notions of the *unity* of God were equally so.

2 CHRON. ii. 5.—“The house which I build is great: for great is our God above all gods.”

These words are addressed to Hiram, King of Tyre, and clearly acknowledge that the gods of Tyre were real divinities, though inferior to the God of Solomon; whereas Jephthah, at an earlier time, seems to have recognized some degree of equality in the God of the Ammonites.

JUDGES xi. 24.—“Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy God giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess.”

And this enables us to understand, what must

otherwise be quite incomprehensible, how that Solomon in his old age, when the temple-service was no longer new, and when the ardour of his youthful zeal had abated, thought it necessary to propitiate other gods, though he never abandoned the worship of Jehovah.

1 KINGS xi. 6, 7.—“And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went *not fully* after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem; and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon.”

Concerning which sad declension on the part of Solomon, as well as concerning his disputed succession, the later narrative is, consistently, altogether silent.

The prowess of David had conquered and united the kingdom, and had bequeathed it to Solomon in the highest state of wealth, strength, and prosperity; one natural consequence of which was the erection of a temple in the new capital, more or less resembling those which neighbouring kingdoms had long before possessed in honour of the gods whom they acknowledged. The royal temple implied an established hierarchy of priests and attendants; and it is here that we find the origin of that priesthood, of whose organization in earlier times no trace is to be found in the historic records, excepting some very apocryphal genealogies of comparatively recent date (1 Chron. i.) The people who had but recently become a nation were as yet only commencing their progress from barbarism to civilization, and from polytheism to gradually more and more spiritual notions of the Divine Unity; and as one strong mind after another was led by inspiration to see and to utter something of the higher truth, in the office of prophet, priest, or king; the wheat that was among the chaff, like the handful of corn on the top of a mountain, took root here and there, and brought

forth fruit for future harvests, and thus the whole nation was slowly led on, towards higher and higher conceptions of the oneness and spirituality of God. It seems to have been among the priesthood, in a great measure, that these doctrines had their growth. Their jealousy for the dignity and glory of their God, above all other gods, ripened by degrees into faith in Him, as the one God over all.

In all the prayers and orations of Solomon at the opening of the temple, and in the direct verbal replies which he is said to have received from God, there is not a single reference to Moses nor to his law; nor do we find that there was any reading of the book of the law on this great occasion, nor throughout the whole of Solomon's reign. We cannot even find that the priests and Levites had anything wherein to instruct the people, nor that they gave them any instruction at all, as is first said to have been done in the reign of Jehoshaphat, and afterwards in the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah.

We have indeed mention made of statutes, judgments, and commandments:—

2 CHRON. vii. 19.—“But if ye turn away and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods and worship them.” . . .

But such expressions may, most probably, refer to the laws which Samuel and David had instituted, at and after the foundation of the monarchy.

1 KINGS iii. 3.—“And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father.”

Which, being divinely inspired, were of course regarded as divine laws. The statutes referred to may also be those which were engraved on the tables of stone; but that these references do not apply to the *book* of the law, can be shown by evident proofs.

We learn from the earlier narrative, that Solomon offered sacrifice three times a year.

1 KINGS ix. 25.—“And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon the altar which he built unto the Lord, and he burnt incense upon the altar that was before the Lord.”

The later historian greatly increases the number of times for sacrifice, but gives names to the three great occasions.

2 CHRON. viii. 12, 13.—“Then Solomon offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord, on the altar of the Lord which he had built before the porch; even after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of Moses on the Sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts three times in the year, even in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.”

The simpler and more trustworthy account would suggest that these three festivals were the same as those which most heathen nations, and which our own Scandinavian ancestors observed.

EXOD. xxiii. 14-16.—“Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread, and the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labours which thou hast sown in thy field; and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.”

But, of the observance of the Passover and other feasts, as enjoined by the law, we have not in either narrative the slightest trace.

DEUT. xvi. 16.—“Three times in a year shall *all thy males* appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty.”

In like manner the Sabbath is named in the later narrative, but only named, as in the passage quoted above (2 Chron. viii. 13); and it may well be that the Sabbath, as a *day of rest*, had come down from the earliest time.

EXOD. xxiii. 12.—“Six days shalt thou do thy work, and on the seventh thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid and the stranger may be refreshed.”

But the negative evidence is complete, that Solomon knew nothing of the Sabbath as a day “*holy to the Lord*,” and as enforced in the law.

EXOD. xxxv. 2, 3.—“Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day.” (Compare Num. xv. 32 and 36.)

If Solomon had observed the Sabbath day thus,—if those who gathered sticks on Sabbath had been, in his days, stoned to death, it would assuredly have been noticed in the detailed and particular accounts, which are given of his building operations, and of the king's daily provision (1 Kings iv. 22–28).

We have also the fullest negative proof that the law concerning the Sabbatical year was unknown in Solomon's time.

LEV. xxv. 3, 4.—“Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but, in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard.”

Such a practice as this, and the reading of the law in the year of release, would surely have been recorded in the history of Solomon's time, if any such observance had been then known; but the positive evidence, which in a former chapter (p. 29) we have adduced to prove that this law was not observed in the time of Hezekiah, serves equally to show, that it was neglected or ignored, at any time, from the commencement of the monarchy, to the Babylonish captivity. Even during the earlier part of his reign, while Solomon himself may have been free from the

sin of idolatry, there is not any evidence, that it had ever, in his or in David's times, been regarded as a punishable offence, to worship idols, or other gods besides Jehovah; or that the altars and high places of other gods had ever been destroyed, as being illegal; much less have we any grounds for supposing, that the priests or worshippers of other gods, who, in those early and tolerant times, were probably more numerous than afterwards, had ever been put to death by David or by Solomon on account of their religious errors; as was done by the later reformers in the covenanting times.

All the evidence on record goes to prove, that not only the worship in high places, but the worship also of images and of other gods, was practised and tolerated, until long after Solomon's reign; and we may be very sure that, if there had been any destruction of images, or removal of high places by David or by Solomon, it would have been recorded to their praise, with the same jealous, and somewhat exaggerated care, as in the histories of Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah. From all this the inference appears to be inevitable, that Solomon did not know the second commandment; and that, if he knew the first, "Thou shalt have *no other gods before me*," he must have understood these words "*before me*" in a different sense from that in which we are taught to understand them.

We are not at liberty to attribute the indifference of Solomon to stupidity, for we are told:

1 KINGS iv. 29, 30.—"God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and *largeness of heart*, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore; and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt."

Solomon's *ignorance* of the law, because it was not in existence, is the only rational, and indeed the only possible explanation.

EXOD. xxii. 20.—“He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.”

LEV. xvii. 8, 9.—“Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt-offering or sacrifice; and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the Lord, even that man shall be cut off from among his people.”

That such kings as David and Solomon should know these to be Divine laws, and should yet openly violate them, and constantly tolerate their violation, is utterly inconceivable. The very intolerance of the law, in these and in numerous other passages, marks it as the product of a later time than the age of toleration, which continued up to, and some time after the reign of Solomon.

Thus, instead of finding, as we might reasonably have expected, clear and abundant evidence of the knowledge of the book of the law, at the time when the temple was dedicated, and when the priesthood was established; we have found, instead, in this as in each of our former steps backwards, from the finding of the book, that we are only the further removed from its influence, and that the traces of its existence become gradually less;—in other words, we find the law in each of these periods, at an earlier stage of its growth, and therefore, in each case, notably less and less developed.

According to the earlier narrative, the prosperity of the kingdom was on the wane, before the death of Solomon. Jeroboam, the future king of Israel, was a high officer in the service of Solomon, “Ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph;” and we read that “even he lifted up his hand against the king,” being instigated to this rebellion by the prophet Ahijah.

1 KINGS xi. 30, 31, and 40.—“And Ahijah caught th new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces and he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces; for thus

saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee. . . . Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam; and Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon."

But, on this subject, again the later historian is quite consistently silent; and makes the close of Solomon's reign even to surpass its commencement, in wisdom, righteousness, and triumphant prosperity (2 Chron. ix.), reserving all the guilt and responsibility, as well as all the misfortune and calamity of the approaching evil time, for his son Rehoboam, by whom, after reigning forty years, he was succeeded.

Rehoboam was unfortunate in war, both foreign and domestic, and in his days, the prediction of Ahijah was fulfilled, by the separation of the ten tribes of Israel, viewed in the earlier book as the punishment merited by the idolatries of Solomon's old age.

1 KINGS xi. 31, 33.—"Behold I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon: . . . because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites," &c.

Whereas the later narrative, though referring to Ahijah's prophecy, still throws a veil over Solomon's guilt.

2 CHRON. x. 15.—"For the cause was of God, that the Lord might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat."

According to the earlier narrative, Rehoboam seems from the first to have continued the same system of general toleration which had prevailed under his predecessors, and which continued till the time of Asa.

1 KINGS xiv. 21 and 22.—"And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah . . . and his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. And Judah did evil in the

sight of the Lord, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done : for they also built them high places, and images and groves, on every high hill and under every green tree."

Whereas, according to the later narrative, as Solomon had continued to the last in the path of orthodoxy, so Rehoboam, during his first three years, followed the same good example.

2 CHRON. xi. 17.—"So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong three years, for three years they walked in the way of David and Solomon."

2 CHRON. xii. 1.—"And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him."

From both narratives it thus appears that the great sin, chargeable against Rehoboam, was that he was not intolerant ; that he acknowledged and protected the right of his people to worship according to their conscience, a right which, up to his time, seems never to have been called in question by the civil power, though it does appear to have already been challenged by priests and prophets. Rehoboam did not compel all his subjects, by a covenant of intolerance, to worship Jehovah alone ; but, that he was not hostile to the orthodox worship, is abundantly manifest, from the politic fears of his rival.

1 KINGS xii. 26 and 27.—"And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David : if this people go up to do sacrifice 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 go again to Rehoboam king of Judah."

Rehoboam's good disposition may also be inferred from the statement, that multitudes of the priests, Levites, and devout persons, from the dominions of Jeroboam, sought and found, at Jerusalem, that

security and liberty of worship, which, in the neighbouring kingdom, they could no longer enjoy. (See p. 51.)

Perhaps the *political* intolerance of Jeroboam, directed against these orthodox worshippers, may have been the root and parent of that fiercer *religious* intolerance, which, among the refugees and their sympathizers, speedily grew so strong.

1 KINGS xiv. 30.—“And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days.”

It does not appear that Rehoboam's reign was wholly disastrous, or wholly wicked, for we read that :

2 CHRON. xii. 12.—“When he humbled himself, the wrath of the Lord turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah *things went well.*”

After reigning seventeen years :—

1 KINGS xiv. 31.—“Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was *buried with his fathers*, in the city of David.”

In relating which, the more rigid Chronicler shows the same strict discrimination, as in his accounts of the burials of all the heretic kings: but, in this case, so mildly that it would scarcely be noticed, if not illustrated, by the same partiality, more strongly marked in other instances. (See pp. 60, 61.)

2 CHRON. xii. 16.—“And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was *buried in the city of David*: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.”

Abijah (or Abijam) is the only king who is represented as idolatrous by the earlier authority, but whose fame is untarnished and whose piety is recorded by the later historian; doubtless because he was a friend and patron of the priests.

1 KINGS xv. 3.—“And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was

not perfect with the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father."

In Chronicles the chief thing recorded is a battle with Jeroboam, in which Judah was victorious; and a speech which, before the battle, Abijah addressed to the opposing army, of which the key-note is:—

2 CHRON. xiii. 12.—"Behold God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the Lord God of your fathers, for you shall not prosper."

And, as the result of such faith, we read:

2 CHRON. xiii. 18.—"Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers."

From all which, two inferences may fairly be drawn, first,—that in this, as in the former reigns, there was no legal intolerance, nor violent suppression of the mixed worship, which hitherto had prevailed; and second,—that the orthodox priesthood enjoyed the royal favour, and had already attained to considerable power and influence; which, as usual, only served to encourage them to hope and strive for something more than they had yet achieved: even for the entire extinction of heresy by the sword of the law, and for the establishment of absolute intolerance, instead of that freedom of worship, and that right to differ, with which no king hitherto had interfered.

After reigning only three years, Abijah was succeeded by his son Asa, under whom the priestly doctrines of infallibility and intolerance, at length obtained full sway.

In the period, to which this chapter has been devoted, there has been unmistakably less ritualism, less sacerdotalism, and less conformity to the Mosaic law, than in any of the more recent periods, which we

have examined ; but we have here seen the origin of the established priesthood, consequent on the institution of the temple service ; and we have seen a large number of zealous priests, and of religious persons, assembled at Jerusalem, in consequence of their expulsion by Jeroboam. We have also already heard the spirit of persecution, and of arrogant infallibility, sounding in the blast of their trumpets ;—the same spirit, the same trumpets, the same priests as those, who, shortly afterwards, inspired and responded to Asa's covenanted law, that all heretics should surely be put to death.

CHAPTER VI.

SEARCH CONTINUED.

THE JUDGES TO SOLOMON.—B.C. 1425 TO 1015.

Having traced the history of Judah through four periods, extending from the finding of the book back to the accession of Solomon and the building of the temple ; we now find that another step backwards brings us to the very commencement of the continuous history, in the time of Samuel ; beyond which, the records evidently cease to be historical in their character, the book of Judges being undisguisedly legendary and fragmentary ; while the assumed authenticity and antiquity of the book of Joshua must evidently and admittedly either stand or fall along with that of the Pentateuch ; so that, for our present purpose, the book of Judges is the earliest source whereto we can appeal for evidence ; unless critical and learned discrimination be employed, in which, though I might perhaps follow, I cannot pretend to lead.

Our earliest period must therefore be regarded as commencing with the era of the Judges, which era is

variously estimated to extend from three hundred to four hundred years, reaching from the death of Joshua to the accession of Saul. The book of Judges consists of a number of detached narratives of events, to which none but the most arbitrary and uncertain chronological arrangement can be applied. During all this time there are only two instances, in which priests or Levites are mentioned, and, in neither of these, does the narrative afford the slightest support, to the later doctrine of tribal distinction. In the first of these cases, Micah, a man of Mount Ephraim (Judges xvii. and xviii.), made for himself a "house of gods" and images; and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest; but was glad, when he afterwards had the opportunity, to secure a young man of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and who, for a stipulated remuneration, continued to be Micah's priest, until the Danites violently carried off both priest and images, to their new possessions in the north; and founded there some kind of religious institution, in which the priest-Levite, of the tribe of Judah, was succeeded by a priestly family of whose tribe there is no certain trace, for it is not clear that *Manasseh* was their *tribe*.

JUDGES xviii. 30.—"And the children of Dan set up the graven image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan, until the day of the captivity of the land."

The only other passage, in which a Levite is mentioned, is the story (Judges xix. and xx.) of the barbarous outrage committed by the men of Gibeah, on the Levite's wife; and the bloody revenge exacted for their crime; but the narrative throws no light at all upon the worship, office, or tribe of this Levite.

In all this book there are only three sacrifices described, at none of which, either priest or Levite seems to have officiated.

Manoah, the father of Samson, of the tribe of Dan, offered a sacrifice, which was visibly accepted.

JUDGES xiii. 20.—“For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar.”

Gideon, an Abi-ezrite, and a mighty man of valour, belonging to a heathen, or Baal-worshipping family, but whose tribe is not named, was specially commanded to offer sacrifice :

JUDGES vi. 26.—“And build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove, which thou shalt cut down.”

And Jephtha the Gileadite in fulfilment of his horrid vow, said to have been made under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, (Judges xi. 29), offered up his daughter, as a burnt-offering to the Lord; a deed recorded without a shadow of disapproval, and which the Jews were taught to regard with entire approbation; if we may judge from the reference to it in the New Testament (Heb. xi. 32).

When we compare the sacrifice offered by Jephtha with that intended by Abraham (Gen. xxii. 10); and when we consider the awe with which a similar sacrifice, though offered by a heathen king, inspired a victorious Jewish army :—

2 Kings iii. 26, 27.—“And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him. . . . 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 indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.”—

we are forced to conclude, that human sacrifices were not so singular, nor even so uncommon among the Jews, as we are apt to think; and they seem even to be recognised by the law :—

LEV. xxvii. 28, 29.—“No devoted thing, which a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, both of man and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed: every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but shall surely be put to death.”

NUM. xviii. 15.—“Everything that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the Lord, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the first born of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.”

EXOD. xxxiv. 20.—“But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and, if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the first born of thy sons thou shalt redeem; and none shall appear before me empty.”

From all which, it seems much more than probable that, in Jephthah's, and even in later times, the sacrifice of children was not very extraordinary; but was regarded as the most acceptable orthodox worship, and as the best evidence of sincere piety.

No candid reader will deny, that these passages in the law, and other similar passages, must either be founded on ancient customs, well-known before, and only sanctioned and regulated by the promulgation of the law; or else must be regarded as *introducing*, and commanding, the practice of human sacrifice; and as we find that such sacrifices were offered, at a time when the Levitism of the law was wholly unknown; and that these sacrifices were condemned and abolished when the Levitical law became fully developed, it may be concluded that, in this case, the law was founded on the custom, and not the custom on the law. This does not, however, at all exclude the idea that there may have been ancient laws instituting or authorizing even the most ancient customs, and afterwards embodied, with too little discrimination, by the compilers of the more recent code.

There is no description in the book of Judges of any other sacrifice; and, while neither Manoah,

Gideon, nor Jephthah required the intervention of a priest, it is no way attributed to them, as a sin, that they usurped the priest's office ; but on the contrary, there are, in each case, manifest tokens of acceptance and approval. Nor does there appear, either in the parties themselves or in the narrator, the slightest consciousness of irregularity in the circumstance, that these sacrifices were offered at the three different residences of the parties ; implying a total ignorance of the law which was in later times enacted for the suppression of the high places (Lev. xvii. 8, 9). In the times which we are now considering, it is manifest that no one had ever begun to think that there was only one place in which God could be worshipped ; nor did this idea take the form of law, until the time of Hezekiah, four hundred years after the last of the judges.

Manoah, Gideon, Jephthah, and others are said to have been favoured with direct guidance and instruction from God ; yet their manifest ignorance and neglect of the ordinances of the Levitical law, and the wholly unlevitical worship which they practised, are never at all reprov'd. And while there is one solitary voice raised against the worship of *other gods* ;—

JUDGES vi. 8, 10.—“The Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage. . . . and I said unto you, I am the Lord your God ; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell : but ye have not obeyed my voice ”—

yet the worship of God by images, though a prevailing custom, is not once rebuked, nor was it known to be sinful, so far as we can learn from the narrative. Gideon, whose piety is extolled both during his life and after his death, while fully acknowledging the Lord, and with the best intention, made a golden image or ephod whereby to worship him (Judges viii.

22-35): and we have seen that Micah, with his Levite, worshipped also by images: and that the Danites, who robbed him, did the same.

As might be expected, in these rude and unsettled times, there is abundance of evidence, that the prevailing notions of morality, and of the moral character of God, were extremely low; of which the story of Jael and Sisera (Judges iv., v.) is a good illustration. Sisera, whose army had been defeated by the Jews, fled from the field, and sought refuge in the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, a *neutral*, with whom Sisera was at peace, Jael met him with offers of hospitable concealment, and assurances of safety; and, when she had lulled him to security and sleep, for he was weary, she killed him by driving a nail through his temples, and fastening it into the ground. Deborah was a prophetess and judge over Israel; and, in her song, inspired by the 'Angel of the Lord,' Jael is praised in the highest terms, and 'blessed above women,' for her cold-blooded treachery, and her murderous deed; on the horrible details of which, the prophetess gloatingly dwells:—

JUDGES v. 24-26.—“Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. He asked water and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera; she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples,” &c., &c.

These sentiments were uttered in a song of praise to God, and were evidently regarded as acceptable to Him.

JUDGES v. 31.—“So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.”

The God, whom Deborah worshipped, is thus seen to be one, whom for us to worship would be impossible; his name might be the same as that of Him

whom we adore ; but God is not in a name, even as God is not in an image.

Before leaving the book of Judges, let us pause to reflect that the people, of whom this book is the only record, lived about six hundred years nearer to the time of Moses, the great lawgiver, than did Hezekiah and Josiah ; and that we might therefore fairly expect to trace, in their customs and in their worship, fresh, continual, and indubitable proofs, of the existence and recognition of the 'Mosaic law ;' the promulgation of which would to them have been a recent tradition, as their fathers or grandfathers might have been with Moses at Sinai. And let us then consider, whether we have been, in the course of this inquiry, approaching to, or *receding from*, the real date of the law.

The book of Ruth relates to the time of the judges, and the chief purpose of its writer seems to have been to record and to honour the ancestry of David, whose great-grandmother was Ruth (iv. 22).

In this book, there is nothing either prophetic or Levitical ; and, while marked by a fine religious sentiment, it contains no allusion to priests, to sacrifice, nor to any act of worship.

The '*custom*,' in accordance with which Boaz took Ruth to be his wife, is akin to, but is quite distinct from, that sanctioned by the law of Moses, (compare Ruth iii. 13, iv. 5 & 8, with the precepts in Deut. xxv. 5-10).

Neither Boaz nor the writer of the book seems to have had the slightest idea that the marriage was sinful or illegal ; being a transgression of the law, which forbade the Hebrews to intermarry with the surrounding heathen nations.

EXOD. xxxiv. 15 and 16.—“Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land : . . . and thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a

whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods."

DEUT. vii. 3.—"Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son."

But the conduct of Boaz, in marrying Ruth the Moabitess, is recorded as if it were pious and unimpeachable, and as an incident honouring to the memory of David's ancestors; and the same ignorance of this law may be traced through every stage of the history, till after the finding of the book. David had heathen wives, (2 Sam. iii. 3), and so had Solomon, even while he was building the temple (1 Kings iii. 1). Solomon's mother was a Hittite; and Rehoboam's was an Ammonitess (2 Chron. xii. 13). But, in Ezra's times, the law was rigorously enforced; and such mixed marriages were declared null and void, because known to be illegal.

EZRA ix. 2.—"They have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons; so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of these lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass."

EZRA x. 10, 11, 19.—"And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers, and do his pleasure; and separate yourselves from the people of the land and from the strange wives. . . . And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and, being guilty, they offered a ram of the flock for their trespass."

Surely here the inference is unavoidable, that Ezra was acquainted with a portion of the 'Mosaic law,' which, in the times of Boaz, David, and Solomon, did not exist; and which was unknown to the author of the book of Ruth.

In the book of Samuel, we have the earliest portion

of the *continuous* history of the Jewish nation ; and, at its opening, we find the civil power in the hands of a priest, Eli, who judged Israel forty years (1 Sam. iv. 18.) Eli was succeeded in both his offices by the great Samuel ; in whose person the priesthood attained to a degree of authority and influence, which seems to have been always regarded by the later priests as an example and a model, after which they ought to strive whenever it was safe or possible to do so. For us it must therefore be peculiarly interesting to note the main features of Samuel's career.

Samuel was a priest from his youth, having been educated by Eli almost from his infancy, in the Sanctuary at Shiloh, which is one of several places mentioned in Samuel's time as being Sanctuaries, or houses of God ; such as Mizpeh, Judges, xxi., 4, 5, and 1 Sam. vii., 9, 11 ; Beth-el, (*meaning* house of God) 1 Sam. vii. 16 ; Gilgal, 1 Sam. xi. 15 ; and Gibeah, 2 Sam. vi. 2, 3 : all of which were most probably included among those places of local worship, which Hezekiah suppressed. Besides worshipping in these, afterwards forbidden places, Samuel built an altar at his own residence.

1 SAM. vii. 17.—“ And his return was to Ramah ; for there was his house ; and there he judged Israel, and there he built an altar unto the Lord.”

Samuel had evidently no idea that, in thus worshipping at various altars, he was guilty of violating God's law. (Lev. xvii. 8, 9 ; Josh. xxii. 29.)

In connection with Eli's death, an incident is recorded, which shows, in our opinion very clearly, that the worship of Jehovah was, at that time, scarcely, if at all, less idolatrous, than the worship of other Gods. The Israelites had been defeated in a battle with the Philistines, with the loss of four thousand men ; and before renewing the combat, they said :—

1 SAM. iv. 3.—“ Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, *it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.*”

This is the very earliest historic mention of the ark, if we except a parenthetical clause (Judges xx. 27) to which no importance can be attached, being manifestly an interpolation by some comparatively recent hand.

Both Israelites and Philistines regarded the ark as *an idol* ; or, in other words, as a symbol of the Divine presence ; for what is any idol or image, more than a *symbol* of God ? The veriest idolater does not believe, that his bit of wood or stone *is God* ; but that it is an emblem, a sign, or a dwelling place of the Deity ; and that God is somehow represented by it, or present in it. Hear what the Hindoo has to say for himself, and it would be easy to multiply evidence of this kind, “ It is *not* the image that we worship as the Supreme Being, but the Omnipresent Spirit that pervades the image as He pervades the whole universe. If, firmly believing as we do, in the omnipresence of God, we behold, by the aid of our imagination, in the *form* of an image, any of His glorious manifestations ; ought we to be charged with identifying Him with the matter of the image ? ” * In like manner, we suppose, but *only* in like manner, neither did Jews nor Philistines imagine, that the ark *was God* ; though both parties evidently regarded it as the visible *eidolon* —symbol or idol, of God’s invisible presence.

1 SAM. iv. 4, 5, 7.—“ So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims. . . . and when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. . . . And the Philistines were afraid ; for they said God is come into the camp. And they

* From an English lecture by a Hindoo, in defence of his religion ; quoted in “ *Good Words*,” February 1869, p. 100.

said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore."

But the Philistines were again victorious; the ark was taken; the two sons of Eli were slain; the old priest himself, when hearing the sad news, fell backwards and broke his neck; and his daughter-in-law died, in premature labour, naming her child Ichabod:

1 SAM. iv. 22.—"And she said, the glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken."

The Philistines, however, suffered various miraculous afflictions while they retained the ark; and were glad to send it back with a trespass offering (vi. 3.) It was brought to Beth-shemesh, where, for looking into the ark, fifty thousand people were slain!

1 SAM. vi. 19, 20.—"And the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. And the men of Beth-Shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? and to whom shall he go up from us?"

Surely it is only prejudice, confirmed by, so-called, orthodox training, that hinders so generally the readers of the Bible, from here discerning the merest idolatry and ignorance of the ever-present power of Him who dwelleth not in temples made with hands.

Samuel had not a word to say against this image worship, nor against the worship in high places; but he denounced the sin of worshipping other gods. This was the great message of all the early prophets, that the Jews ought to worship Jehovah alone—the first step towards the higher truth, that God is One by whatever name he may be called.

1 SAM. vii. 3.—"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

AMOS iii. 2.—“ You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

We apprehend that these two quotations throw light upon each other: and that, together, they afford a fair criterion, by which to judge of the standard religious sentiment of the Jews at the commencement of the monarchy (compare Ezra iv. 2, 3, and 2 Kings xvii. 27, 28); the sentiment which Samuel, David, Amos, and others strove to inculcate; but which, for a long time, the people were slow to learn.

In the time of the earlier judges, the Jews were far from being a united people; on the contrary, they were a number of separate and independent tribes, one or more of which, generally in a time of pressing danger, appointed some one to govern them and to lead their armies. Sometimes the tribes under the judges fought against other tribes, and sometimes against foreigners. The so-called judges were in fact chieftains, generally selected or acknowledged on account of their warlike prowess; and were, in some cases, such men as would now be called freebooters or brigands (Judges x. 18.)

JUDGES xi. 3, 5, 6.—“ Then Jephthah fled from his brethren, and dwelt in the land of Tob; and there were gathered vain men to Jephthah, and went out with him. And it was so that when the children of Ammon made war against Israel, the elders of Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob; and they said unto Jephthah, come and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon.”

And so Jephthah became “judge,” and ruled for six years. Samson was the last of these old judges, and in his days, the Jews were subject to the Philistines.

JUDGES xv. 11.—“ Knowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? ”

And Samson judged Israel twenty years (Judges xvi.

31), frequently astonishing the Philistines, with his feats of strength and prowess, but never effecting the independence of his people. The spirit of freedom seems to have been quenched, and the neck of Israel was bowed to the yoke; as shown in the passage from which the above quotation is taken. Probably the Philistines would not allow a warlike judge to succeed Samson; or, perhaps, there was no such man to be found. The people were so subdued and servile, that they submitted, *for the first time*, to be governed by a priest.

The Bible narrative does not show the connection between the books of Judges and of Samuel, but, according to Josephus, Eli succeeded Samson (Ant. v., ix. 1). From the tenor of the three first chapters of Samuel, we may gather, that till near the close of Eli's long life, there had been some thirty or forty years of peaceful subjection, during which, perhaps through the over-confident security of their rulers, the tribes seem to have become more united, and to have developed somewhat of a national spirit, and of a desire for independence.

At last they made an effort to throw off the oppressor's sway, their disastrous failure in which was the occasion of Eli's death; but the attempt was renewed and was finally successful under the rule of his successor Samuel.

1 SAM. vii. 3-14.—“Prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve him only; and he will *deliver you* out of the hand of the Philistines. . . . And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and *I will pray for you* unto the Lord. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. . . . And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God *for us*, that he will save us out of the land of the Philistines. . . . And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord, and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel;

and the Lord heard him. . . . So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel. . . . And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel."

Here, we have probably the very earliest distinct view of the priest *making intercession* for the people—a *mediator* between God and man. In the times of Gideon, Jephthah, and Manoah, the prayer of the suppliant was addressed directly to Jehovah; every man was his own priest, and might build his own altar where he chose. But, now, we have the people confessing their sins, and expressing their penitence to the priest, and begging *him* to cry unto the Lord *for them*. This notion had doubtless been growing in Eli's time, and may perhaps be traced in his intercourse with Hannah (1 Sam. i. 17), but this is the first clear expression of it that we have on record; and thus we first become acquainted with that veil of separation, which has served so long to obscure and to discolour the light of divine truth, and which has done so much to hinder the approach of man to God. This is the real veil of the temple, about whose rending, by the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, there can be no manner of doubt; and whether any veil of cloth was then rent or not is a question of small importance. But, though rent at that time, even from the top throughout, and never since then thoroughly repaired, it has been often, and in many places, wonderfully patched and mended up, and much, very much of it, though decayed and decaying, still hangs together, even at the present day.

I am greatly mistaken if the foregoing portion of this chapter has not placed us in a position to discern with clearness, that, according to our authorities, it is in Samuel's time that we have the very first trace, record, or evidence of the idea of a theocracy,—of Jehovah's direct government of the nation, in temporal affairs, through the ministry of his vicegerent, the

priest. Samuel seems to have been the man who originated also this great idea, closely akin to the other one, that the priest was the appointed mediator between God and man. We have seen evidence enough, that, in the time of the early judges, no such idea was known, but that the priest then occupied a very subordinate position. If the theocracy had really been established in the time of Moses and Joshua, with the completely organized hierarchy of priests and Levites, as described in the Pentateuch; it must be marvellous, to say the least of it, that all trace or record of such institutions should have, so soon and so entirely, disappeared; and that it had to be all reconstructed, from the very foundation, by Eli and Samuel.

Samuel, combining in himself the power of the supreme magistrate, with the office of the priesthood, and with all the prestige of success in war, though the first to teach this doctrine, was in a position to assert for it a higher claim than any of his successors. He had a great advantage over Jehoiada, in whose days the people were accustomed to a dynasty of kings; and had far more independent power than Ezra and his successors, who ruled only by permission of the Persian monarch.

EZRA vii. 12, 13.—“ Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time. I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee. (Read also ver. 25 and 26.)

In Ezra's time the people were again humbled and broken in spirit, by their long captivity and by their continued subjection to foreign power; and were again prepared to acknowledge the supremacy of the priesthood, by the restoration of the theocracy. In these later times, accordingly, they endeavoured to realize the great beau-ideal of which Samuel's primi-

tive example had been the prototype and germ ; growing and developing itself, in the minds of the priesthood, through six intervening centuries, and asserting itself, meanwhile, in various degrees, wherever circumstances would permit.

1 SAM. viii. 1, 4-7.—“ And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. . . . Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah. And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But *the thing displeased Samuel*, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel. . . . They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”

1 SAMUEL x. 19.—“ Ye have this day rejected your God who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us.”

Samuel took the highest possible ground, by thus declaring, in the name of God, that the desire of the people to have an earthly king, instead of being ruled by a succession of priests, was high treason, not merely against the priest, as God's vicegerent, but against Jehovah himself. Manifestly Samuel was not aware, that the people, in desiring to have a king, were only following out the directions of the Mosaic law; but indeed we may perhaps be justified, in regarding this portion of the law, as written *retrospectively*, with a view to the events recorded in the book of Samuel.

DEUT. xvii. 14, 15.—“ When thou art come unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and thou shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee.”

The people, however, seem to have been somewhat sceptical about Samuel's doctrine on this subject, whether it was that they knew the law better than he did, or that they were influenced only by a shrewd and jealous regard for their natural rights and liberties.

1 SAMUEL viii. 19-22.—“ Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel ; and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us ; that we also may be like all the nations ; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Harken unto their voice and make them a king.”—(Comp. 1 Sam. xii. 17.)

Samuel, after often repeated protests and protesting to the very last, at length yielded to the unanimous wish of the people ; but still sought to terrify them from their purpose, by telling them “ the manner of the king ” that should reign over them.

1 SAM. viii. 14, 15.—“ He will take your fields and your vineyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take *the tenth* of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants.”

This passage contains the only expression which can be construed as an allusion to the tithe law in the whole of Samuel's history ; which circumstance, as well as the manner and purpose of its introduction here, may suffice to prove that the tithe was a tax which Samuel had never presumed to impose, and which, as the birth-right of the priests, was then unknown.

By wisely yielding, before it was too late, Samuel preserved to himself the power of choosing the new king, and much other power ; which in all probability he would have lost entirely, if the nation had been driven, by his obstinate resistance, to the adoption of violent measures. Accordingly, we find that Saul was, in the first instance, *privately* anointed as king by Samuel.

1 SAM. ix. 27.—“And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid thy servant pass on before us (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may show thee the word of God.”

1 SAM. x. 1.—“Then Samuel took a vial of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?”

And the formal election, ostensibly by God, but practically by the mediation of the priest, took place *afterwards* in public.

1 SAM. x. 19-22.—“Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord, by your tribes and by your thousands. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him he could not be found. Therefore they enquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.”

Matthew Henry's Commentary on this transaction is a fine specimen of orthodox interpretation, its quaint simplicity being truly admirable:—“He puts them upon choosing their king by lot. He knew whom God had chosen, and had already anointed him; but he knew also the peevishness of that people, and that there were those among them who would not acquiesce in the choice, if it depended upon his single testimony; and therefore that every tribe, and every family of the chosen tribe, might please themselves with having a throw for it, he calls them to the lot. Benjamin is taken out of all the tribes, and out of that tribe Saul the son of Kish. By this method, *it would appear to the people*, as it already appeared to Samuel, that Saul was appointed of God to be king, for the disposal of the lot is of the Lord. When the tribe of Benjamin was taken, they might easily foresee that they were setting up a family

that would soon be put down again ; for dying Jacob had by the spirit of prophecy entailed the dominion upon Judah (Gen. xlix. 10, 27). Those, therefore, that knew the scriptures, could not be very fond of doing that which they foresaw must ere long be undone." As we learn from the narrative, that Samuel had previous and private knowledge of the man who would, in this public and ceremonious fashion, be chosen ; so it is at least very natural to suppose that Samuel may also have had information as to where the man was to be found when he was wanted. How very real and natural all this appears if we would only read it aright !

1 SAM. x. 24, 25.—“ And all the people shouted and said, God save the king.

Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and *wrote it in a book*, and laid it up before the Lord. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.”

Samuel *wrote* in a book that which he had *told* the people. Does this mean that he made a copy of the book, which he had read in their hearing ?

DEUT. xvii. 18.—“ And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a *copy* of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests, the Levites.”

Was the book of Moses that which Samuel *told* and *wrote* ? And did he do so in obedience to this law ? But this law is one of those relating to the conduct of the *king*, when he should be chosen to rule the people ; and, as we have seen a few pages back, that Samuel ignored the lawfulness of the people choosing a king, and was not guided by Jacob's prediction that the king should be of the tribe of Judah ; so we must infer that he was also ignorant of this law, relating to the king's special duties. Thus the natural sense of the words *told* and *wrote*, in the absence of any reference or allusion to Moses or to his law, is

certainly the true sense, signifying that Samuel spoke and wrote of his own wisdom and wit, with whatever measure of inspiration he may have enjoyed. The law which he wrote for Saul, was most probably the first national foundation upon which all the subsequent Jewish law-making was built; this very law for the conduct of a new king, being evidently constructed on the example set by Samuel at the commencement of the monarchy.

Every particular in the history of Saul brings forcibly to view the very primitive and rude state of the people at that time. As an illustration let us look at the first incident recorded in his reign. When messengers came to tell him that one of his cities was attacked by the Ammonites, and its inhabitants threatened with having all their right eyes thrust out.

1 SAM. xi. 5, 6, 7.—“Behold Saul came after the herd out of the field; and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? And they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly; and he took a yoke of oxen and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel, by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul *and after Samuel*, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent.”

And so Jabesh was relieved, the Ammonites were defeated, and Saul was confirmed in his kingdom. It is clear, however, that Samuel still regarded the office of the king, as entirely subordinate to that of the priest; for, in connection with Saul's next enterprise, against the Philistines, we read, that the king himself offered sacrifice, after waiting seven days for Samuel, who did not come at the time appointed; and, though the king condescended to plead with the priest, and to state what appear to be genuine reasons, for what he had done, yet the priest was not to be appeased.

1 SAM. xiii. 11-14.—“ And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal and I have not made supplication to the Lord: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which he commanded thee. . . . Thy kingdom shall not continue; the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart; and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people.”

Saul was not now at liberty, to suppose that he could worship or make supplication to God, excepting through the mediation of a priest. That, which the old judges had piously done, with clear tokens and full consciousness of the divine approval, was now to be regarded as a heinous transgression of God's law. There can be little doubt, that the exclusive rights and privileges of the priesthood, as Samuel conceived that these ought to be, had been, much more than the royal prerogative, strictly guarded and provided for, in the book which Samuel had written: and, therefore, the king was held inexcusable.

Unconsecrated men might no longer presume to approach within the sacerdotal veil, which had now been drawn between them and God; and any disregard of the barrier thus set up, was, by the priest, denounced as sacrilege, and unpardonable sin.

Upon another occasion, the poor king had to submit to a similar humiliating rebuke. By Samuel's direction, Saul undertook an expedition against the Amalekites.

1 SAM. xv. 3, 8, 9.—“ Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, *infant and suckling* (!) ox and sheep, camel and ass. . . . And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people

with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep and of the oxen."

Clemency is the noblest prerogative of the crown ; but even this was denied, and trampled in the dust, by the haughty priest.

1 SAM. xv. 23, 28, 33.—"Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. . . . The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine that is better than thou. . . . And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces *before the Lord* in Gilgal."

These are the only two faults or offences which are recorded against Saul ; unless we are to regard as such his subsequent hostility to David and his supporters. He is not at all accused of worshipping other gods, nor of any kind of immorality or excess. He seems to have been even entirely innocent of any such oppression and extortion as those which Samuel, to serve his own selfish purpose, had predicted of him : and when, in the time of his distress, at the very close of his forty years' reign, he once more humbled himself to the shade of the old priest, whom he had recalled from beyond the tomb ; even then, when he had lived his life, and when all his sins had been committed, the ghost of Samuel, whatever or wherever that may have been, whether in the house of the witch or in the mind of the historian, had none but the same unforgiven offence, to allege as a reason for the judgment, which was about to fall on the head of the unfortunate king.

1 SAM. xxviii. 18.—"Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek, therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day."

Saul appears to have had a superstitious dread of Samuel ; but yet he must in some way have asserted his rights, in opposition to Samuel's interference, more contumaciously than in either of these two cases, or

else we may be sure, that even Samuel would not have deemed him unpardonable. So far as can be inferred from the record, the honesty and moral character of Saul was not only equal, but very far superior, to that of either Samuel or David; and his exclusive worship of Jehovah is never called in question. But, for whatever reason, it appears that Samuel very soon discovered that he had been mistaken in his choice; and that he already contemplated the overthrow of Saul; to make way for another more hopeful nominee, whom he thereafter proceeded privately to anoint.

1 SAM. xvi. 1.—“And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill thy horn with oil, and go; I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.”

This purpose or prediction, however, was not fulfilled in Samuel's time; though he thus did his best to secure its fulfilment by stirring up David's ambition, and though he lived eighteen years after Saul became king, and much of that time after anointing his successor. Saul must have given great offence, for—

1 SAM. xv. 35.—“Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death; nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul; and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.”

I believe it is very important clearly to understand the leading incidents in the history of Samuel, because there is manifestly much more simplicity and reality, and therefore much more vivid representation, in this most ancient portion of the narrative, than in the more artificial writings of the later historians; and because there is reason to regard Samuel, and the book of laws which he wrote, as, in spirit, purpose, and action, the very prototypes and models of the whole Jewish priesthood, and of the far more elaborate book of the law, which they in course of time pro-

duced. The sanctimonious pride, the political shrewdness, the strict ritualism, the grasping ambition and, doubtless, also, the genuine religious zeal of Samuel may be recognized as the most prominent characteristics of the priests in every stage of their history; and may be read in almost every line of the Mosaic law. In like manner, also, the superstitious credulity and simplicity of Saul, alternating with his times of wilfulness and self-assertion, may fairly be regarded as typical in a very high degree, of the natural character of the whole Jewish people.

At the time when Saul was anointed we read :

1 SAM. x. 9 and 10.—“ And it was so, that when he turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him (Saul) another heart; . . . and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied.”

So now, regarding the anointment of his successor :

1 SAM. xvi. 13 and 14.—“ Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren : and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward : . . . but the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an *evil spirit from the Lord* troubled him.”

There is no trace until a much later period of the history of the notion of a personal devil, or ruling spirit of evil; but good and bad spirits are alike represented as directly executing the will of Jehovah, to whom the immediate authorship of both good and evil is unhesitatingly ascribed.

ISAIAH xlv. 7.—“ I form the light and create darkness : I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.”

ISAIAH xix. 14.—“ The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof : and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof.”

AMOS iii. 6.—“ Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid ? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it ? ”

EXOD. xiv. 17.—“ And I, behold, I will harden the hearts

of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them; and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host."

JUDGES ix. 23.—"Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech.

1 KINGS xxii. 23.—"Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee."

It would be easy to multiply such illustrations; but these, and others which we have previously noticed, are amply sufficient to teach us, how very low was the *highest* standard of morality among the ancient Jews; and how grossly dark and heathenish were their notions of the character of God. We must observe that such sentiments as these not only show a very low and somewhat devilish conception of God; but that they are also indicative of a religious belief, in which the terrors of superstition and the powers of darkness (whatever these may be) count for more than their share. It is not at all so difficult, as at first sight appears, to realize how Saul, when he had listened to the humiliating rebukes, and to the public anathemas of the great Samuel, and when he found that the back of his holiness was sternly turned on him, should very thoroughly feel that an evil spirit from God had come to trouble him; much in the same way as we may suppose that an ignorant but sincere Roman Catholic might feel, if he had been publicly cursed by his priest at the altar, and the curses confirmed by the bishop and the pope.

When Saul was troubled with this evil spirit, he was advised to try the soothing influence of music, and his servants were commanded to provide a musician.

1 Sam. xvi. 18.—"Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him."

It is not easy to reconcile this description with the account given in the following chapter of the same book, of David's encounter with the Philistine giant.

1 SAM. xvii. 33, 42, 55, 56.—“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth. . . . And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. . . . And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Enquire thou, whose son this stripling is.”

It is very remarkable that David, the musician, was a mighty valiant warrior and prudent in matters; while David the champion was at a later time a youthful stripling. We may also notice, that on each of these occasions, we seem to have the account of a *first* introduction of David as a stranger to Saul; and that, on the later of the two, he was not recognized as David, who had been musician and armour-bearer to the king; but was designated David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite (1 Sam. xvii. 58.)

David was, after his victory, received with favour by the king, and promoted to the command of the army.

1 SAM. xviii. 5.—“And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war; and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.”

But this pleasant state of matters did not long continue. The jealousy of Saul was aroused by the fame, which David's prowess had gained for him, and which seemed to eclipse the renown of Saul's own achievements.

1 SAM. xviii. 8, 9.—“And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed

but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward."

It soon became necessary for David to escape for his life; Saul having, on several occasions, tried to kill him, when under the influence of the evil spirit; and, from this violence, as well as from the language of Saul, it is manifest that some rumours of David's anointment, and of the ambitious views which he had thus been led to entertain, had reached the ears of the king.

1 SAM. xx. 30, 31.—"Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan; and he said unto him As long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established nor thy kingdom; wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die."

It would also appear that, in consequence of these rumours, and of David's popularity, Saul had soon reason to suspect the loyalty even of some of his immediate attendants.

1 SAM. xxii. 7, 8.—"Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now, ye Benjamites; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds; that all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse?"

Even before his flight, David had a number of personal adherents; for, when Saul, in order to procure his death, had proposed to give him his daughter in marriage, on condition that he should slay one hundred Philistines:—

1 SAM. xviii. 27.—"David arose and went, he *and his men*, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife."

In the account of the first incident in David's flight, we learn that he had young men with him (1 Sam. xxi. 4, 5), for whom and for himself, by

false pretences, he procured food, from Ahimelech the priest of Nob.

1 SAM. xxi. 2.—“And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know anything of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee; and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place.”

Saul regarded the conduct of Ahimelech and the other priests at Nob, as evidence of their treasonable inclination to support the cause of David. The evil spirit made him feel or fancy, that the whole influence of the priesthood was turned against him.

1 SAM. xxii. 13.—“And Saul said unto Ahimelech, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread and a sword, and hast enquired of God for him, that he should rise against me to lie in wait as at this day.”

And all Ahimelech's protestations of innocence did not save him, and eighty of his family or friends, from being put to death at the command of Saul; of which crime, the responsibility, in a great degree, rests upon David, his deceit having caused Ahimelech's destruction, as was indeed clearly acknowledged by himself.

1 SAM. xxii. 22.—“And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house.”

This seems to have been the turning point in the history of Saul. The evil spirit of superstitious dread had driven him to the opposite extreme. The threats and curses, uttered against him by Samuel, would naturally make him too ready to magnify the favour shown to his rival by the priest of Nob; and, regarding them as all combined to overturn his throne, he now felt himself driven to bay. He must either defy them, or else surrender the kingdom: and, having

once struck the decisive blow, his course was fixed. We do not read of any more slaughtering, nor even persecution, of priests; but neither do we read of priests having, any longer, power to terrify Saul; until, after many years, when trouble overwhelmed him, and his spirit was again plunged in darkness. May not this slaughter of the priests be the true reason, why the comparatively slight offences, of which Saul had been formerly accused, are recorded as if *they* had been unpardonable?

After David's flight, the number of his followers speedily increased.

1 SAM. xxii. 2.—“And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men,”

who, in the subsequent narrative, are frequently referred to, as ‘*David and his men*.’ and they continued to receive accessions to their number.

1 SAM. xxiii. 13.—“Then David and his men, which were about *six hundred*, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go.”

They were outlaws, wanderers, and rebels; and it does not appear that there were any legitimate resources for the support of such a company; but there is much reason to suppose, both from the nature of the case, and from the story of Nabal (1 Sam. xxv.), that they subsisted, as similar parties have often done, on the booty of their enemies, and on the black-mail of their friends; acting on the principle, that might makes right. To suppress and to punish such a rebellion as this, Saul was bound, both by duty and by interest, to exert his utmost vigour.

It would not illustrate the subject of our inquiry, were we to follow David through the manifold adventures which are recorded of him, while he fled from

place to place, as a fugitive from Saul : nor can we state the duration of his outlawry ; because the narrative furnishes no exact data for such a calculation : but it must have continued for a good many years, terminating only after Saul's death. Latterly, David found it necessary to seek refuge with Achish, the Philistine king, at Gath ; who received him with kindness and hospitality, and gave him the town of Ziklag, for him and his men to dwell in. (1 Sam. xxvii.) As he had deceived the priests at Nob, so now he deceived Achish ; for, having made a raid upon the Amalekites and other friends of the Philistines, he falsely told Achish, that his expedition had been against Judah ; and thus he succeeded in lulling the suspicions and the fears, which the presence of so many traditional enemies could not fail to awaken in the minds of the Philistines.

1 SAM. xxvii. 11, 12.—“And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines. And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him ; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.”

At this point the book of Chronicles takes up the tale ; and we have thenceforth, and throughout the whole subsequent history, two very different narratives to compare, and to contrast. We learn from the Chronicles that David received great reinforcements while he dwelt in Ziklag.

1 CHRON. xii. 22.—“For, at that time, day by day, there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.”

While David was a fugitive, probably *soon* after his flight, Samuel died. The Bible narrative does not tell us exactly when this took place : but, in Josephus we read, (Ant. vi. xiii. 5) : “Samuel governed and

presided over the people alone, after the death of Eli the High Priest, twelve years: and eighteen years together with Saul the king."

For a long time he had abstained from taking, or trying to take, any prominent share in public affairs. Finding that he could not be supreme, he had scorned to accept a subordinate station; and, therefore, he had held himself aloof. Saul and David, however much they differed, seem at least to have agreed, in alike ignoring any such arrogant and ambitious claims, as those which Samuel had put forward, on behalf of the priesthood; and Samuel's successor, if successor he had, never had the chance of asserting such claims, so far as we can learn. The example, which had been set, was never lost sight of, and its influence may be traced through the whole history of the priesthood; but, while the monarchy lasted, these high Sacerdotal pretensions had to remain more or less in abeyance; none of their kings having ever been sufficiently pious, to lay his crown absolutely at the feet of the priests. During all the years of David's exile,—during all the time which intervened between the death of Samuel and the death of Saul, there is only one instance on record, in which the services of a priest were employed; and this happened while David was at Ziklag, not for sacrifice, but for divination, and is recorded in terms, which clearly indicate the subordinate position of the priest.

1 SAM. xxx. 7, 8.—“And David said to Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee bring me hither the ephod. And Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. And *David enquired at the Lord*, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them.”

Chronologers seem all to agree that Saul reigned forty years, thus living twenty-two years after the death of Samuel.

ACTS xiii. 21.—“ And afterward they desired a king : and God gave them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of *forty years*.”

But of the latter portion of this long reign, there is absolutely *nothing* recorded, except a few incidents of *David's* history ; until we come to the circumstances which were immediately connected with the death of Saul. From this silence, and from the fact that David was all this time never more than a fugitive and a refugee, we may fairly infer that Saul's reign was, on the whole, prosperous ; and that, during all these years, he had not been very much troubled with the evil spirit. He seems, during these twenty-two years, to have been endeavouring to free himself from the dark terrors of superstition.

1 SAM. xxviii. 3.—“ Now Samuel was dead. . . . and Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.”

Upon which passage Matthew Henry's Commentary is again well worth quoting :—“ Perhaps, when Saul was himself troubled with an evil spirit, he suspected that he was bewitched ; and for that reason, cut off all that had familiar spirits.”

But, at length, the day of calamity came. The possession of Ziklag had given David a fixed habitation, and a centre of power ; and, according to the chronicler, many of Saul's best captains, and even some of his kindred had gone there to bask in the rays of the rising sun, and were now with David in the enemy's country, and on the enemy's side (1 Chron. xii. 1-22). When, therefore, the Philistine army came up against Saul, he found himself weakened by the defection of those who ought to have been his most reliable supporters ; and, instead of his old warlike spirit being roused, he felt only the sad forebodings of defeat.

1 SAM. xxviii. 5, 6.—“ And, when Saul saw the host of

the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets."

By the visible approach of ruinous disaster, the door was again opened for the return of superstition. He beheld in the dangers with which he was threatened the probable fulfilment of the curses uttered against him by Samuel, about thirty years before; and, as Samuel had wrought the spell, he seems to have thought that if he could, even then, propitiate the shade of the departed priest, perhaps the spell might still be broken. But how should he find access to the world of spirits, having long before renounced the devil, and all his agents and works! Like those who, in much later days, doomed witches to the stake, he had not been able to banish the belief from his mind; although he had banished or destroyed its professors from his kingdom: and so, in the time of his sore distress, he managed, not without search and difficulty, to find a witch; and, through her intervention, he seems to have obtained the interview, which he desired, with the ghost of Samuel. But, by this time, no supernatural wisdom was needed to discern the certainty of the coming destruction, as Saul himself had already discerned it; and so the interview only served to confirm his despair, (1 Sam. xxviii. 7-20). On the following day, the army of Israel was defeated, and Saul and his sons were slain,—the victims of priestcraft and superstition; for was it not Samuel who had balefully instigated the ambitious rivalry of David? and was it not Samuel who had woven the mantle of gloom around the whole life and spirit of Saul?

1 SAM. xxxi. 6.—“So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together.”

2 SAM. i. 19, 23, 27.—“The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! . . . Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and

in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. . . . How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

As the result of their victory, the Philistines took possession of some cities (1 Sam. xxxi 7); but did not render their conquest complete: for we find that Saul was succeeded in his kingdom by his surviving son.

2 SAM. ii. 10, 11.—"Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years. But the house of Judah followed David. And the time that David was king in Hebron, over the house of Judah, was seven years and six months."

2 SAM. v. 4, 5.—"David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah, seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years, over all Israel and Judah."

2 SAM. iii. 1.—"Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker."

It is here that we come upon the first glaring example of that bias and one-sidedness, which may be clearly traced through the whole of the later narrative in Chronicles; according to which, David was at once unanimously chosen and accepted, as king over all Israel. Immediately after the account of Saul's death, we read:—

1 CHRON. xi. 1, 3.—"Then all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh. . . . And David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they *anointed* David king over Israel, according to the word of the Lord by Samuel."

1 CHRON. xii. 38.—"All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel; and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king."

1 CHRON. xxix. 26, 27.—Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. And the time that he reigned over

Israel was forty years ; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem."

In this book, we accordingly find not a word about the long war between David and the house of Saul, (2 Sam. ii. iii) ; for the same reason that it tells us nothing about the murder and the adultery of which David was guilty in the case of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. xi.) ; nor about the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 14) ; in these points, and in very many others, studiously hiding whatever might tarnish or injure ; and magnifying whatever might exalt the glory and the sacerdotalism of David and of his reign.

At length, after a long and *undecisive* struggle, in the course of which Abner, the chief captain and mainstay of the house of Saul, had been treacherously murdered by Joab (2 Sam. iii. 23-27), who stood in the same relation to David, the question was finally and suddenly settled by men who, presuming on Joab's example, contrived to assassinate Ish-bosheth, the reigning son of Saul.

2 SAM. iv. 6, 7.—“ And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat ; and they smote him under the fifth rib. . . . and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night.”

They expected that David would acknowledge and reward the service, which they considered had thus been rendered to his cause ; and, therefore, they brought their own report, and Ish-bosheth's head, to David, but their high hopes were grievously disappointed.

2 SAM. iv. 10, 11.—“ When one told me, saying, Behold Saul is dead (thinking to have brought good tidings) I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings. How much more when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house upon his bed,” &c.

The tribes of Israel being thus deprived, both of their general and of their king, were now willing to recognize the government of David, and to make him king over them all.

2 SAM. v. 1, 3—"Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold we are thy bone and thy flesh. . . . And king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and *they anointed David king over Israel.*"

David was now firmly established on the throne of a united nation; and his career was henceforth one of conquest and of consolidation. His first success was the taking of Jerusalem, which had hitherto been occupied by the Jebusites.

2 SAM. v. 9, 10—"So David dwelt in the fort, and called it the city of David. . . . And David went on, and grew great: and the Lord God of hosts was with him."

Up to this point in the history of David, we cannot find any trace of his worship, nor of his offering sacrifice. On one or two occasions, he is said to have enquired at God; and, in one or two cases priests are mentioned, but that is all. David's life had been too restless, and too wild, for attending to Levitical matters. But after he had fixed his residence in his new capital; and after building for himself a house there, with the assistance of Hiram king of Tyre; after two successful wars with the Philistines; and apparently after a series of marriages and births in Jerusalem, (2 Sam. v. 11, 13, 17, 22); *then* David thought of bringing up the ark of God from Gibeah, where Saul had dwelt, (2 Sam. xxi. 6); and where, therefore, the symbols of divinity, employed in Saul's worship, had their place.

2 SAM. vi. 4—"And they brought it out of the *house of Abinadab*, which was at *Gibeah*, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark."

The ark was placed on a cart drawn by oxen, and

driven by Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, but when they had gone some distance, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah the driver took hold of the ark, for the oxen shook it; for which presumption, Uzzah was struck dead.

2 SAM. vi. 9—"And David was afraid of the Lord that day; and said, How shall the ark of God come to me?"

So he left it there, in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite (*man of Gath*, 2 Sam. xxi. 19, 22) three months; but, as no further harm came of it, he finally brought it home, to the city of David.

2 SAM. vi. 13, 14—"And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. And David danced before the Lord with all his might: and David was girded with a linen ephod."

In all this account, there is not a word of priests or Levites, nor of anything at all Levitical; David offered his own sacrifices, and is the only person said to have worn the dress of a priest; but, in the book of Chronicles, written six hundred years after the event, we read:—

1 CHRON. xv. 2—"Then David said, None ought to bear the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever."

And we have, accordingly, the whole chapter full of Levitical arrangements; with classified lists of about a thousand official personages, priests, Levites, musicians, porters and doorkeepers, as these were employed in the bringing up of the ark; and a remarkable reason for all this array is assigned.

1 CHRON. xv. 13—"For, because ye did it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order."

By the '*due order*,' which, according to this account

was so tardily remembered and observed by David, is of course to be understood that which is described in the Pentateuch.

NUM. iv. 15—"The sons of Kohath shall come to bear it (the ark): but they shall not touch any holy thing lest they die."

DEUT. x. 8—"At that time, the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day."

Of which '*due order*,' it is certainly remarkable that we can neither trace the observance nor the conscious neglect, nor any recognition at all, in the older narrative.

2 SAM. vi. 17—"And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the *tabernacle*, that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord."

1 CHRON. xvi. 1—"So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the *tent* that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt-sacrifices and peace-offerings before God."

This is the earliest notice, to be found in the historic books, of a *tabernacle* for the ark. When the ark had been returned, after its capture by the Philistines, and after it had remained a short time at Beth-shemesh, where fifty thousand men were slain for looking into it, we read:—

1 SAM. vii. 1, 2—"And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the *house of Abinadab*, in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord. And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long: for it was *twenty years*: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord."

But what practical result their lamentations had, we are nowhere directly informed; the ark being never again referred to, until the present occasion,

when David fetches it out of the *house of Abinadab*. If our maps of Palestine are correct, the house of Abinadab at Gibeah could not be the same place, as the house of Abinadab at Kirjath-jearim; otherwise the ark would appear to have rested in that house for about *fifty years*, having been brought thither, before Saul was made king, and having remained during his reign of forty years, and during the seven years of David's reign in Hebron; but, as we are told that the ark remained only *twenty years* at Kirjath-jearim, and that the people then 'lamented after the Lord;' it appears almost certain, that the ark and Abinadab had been removed together, at the end of the twenty years, from that place to Gibeah of Saul, in order that they might be near the royal residence; just as David, in his turn, now brought up the ark, from Gibeah of Saul, (2 Sam. xxi. 6), to the city of David; and placed it in the new tabernacle, which he had made for it there. It thus clearly appears, that the ark had not dwelt in a tabernacle for fifty years; and the building in which the ark was kept, before its capture by the Philistines, was not called a tabernacle, but a house or a temple.

1 Sam. i. 24—"And when she (Hannah) had weaned him (Samuel) she brought him unto the *house* of the Lord in Shiloh."

1 SAM. i. 9.—"Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the *temple* of the Lord."

1 SAM. iii. 3.—"And ere the lamp of God went out in the *temple* of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep."

It is not to be supposed that such a man as Samuel would, in the days of his power, have permitted the ark to remain in an improper building, either at Kirjath-Jearim or at Shiloh, if he had viewed the matter as the writers of the Pentateuch and of the Chronicles did, and it cannot surely be argued that a man who enjoyed such direct divine guidance and in-

spiration could be ignorant of the laws regarding the ark and the tabernacle, if these laws had previously been given. (Num. xviii. 2, 3, &c.) We must, therefore, conclude that neither the tabernacle nor the laws relating to it were in existence in Samuel's time, and that the tabernacle which David made for the ark was really the *first* of which we have any authentic record. Having thus recalled all that can be known regarding the previous history of the ark, we can perhaps appreciate the significance of the following quotation :—

1 CHRON. ix. 22-24.—“All these, which were chosen to be porters in the gates, were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David, and Samuel the seer, did ordain in their set office. So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of the Lord, namely, the *house of the tabernacle*, by wards. In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south, &c.”

A right understanding of this passage is the key to the purpose and spirit of the whole of the Book of Chronicles, and we trust that our readers can now discern its true value.

According to the older narrative, the later portion of David's life was in all respects conformable to what his earlier history had been—a continued series of wars and vicissitudes, crimes and adventures, amidst which we cannot find a single instance in which a priest was at all employed by David, as the instrument or medium of his sacrifices or of his prayers. David's prayers and psalms were addressed by himself direct to God, without the intervention of a priest.

2 SAM. xxii. 1.—“And David spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day the Lord had delivered him, &c.”

In all respects David, according to this book, claimed and exercised the right of being his own priest, as we

have seen that the old judges did, but which poor Saul was condemned for doing; and in the old primitive fashion David offered his own sacrifices:—

2 SAM. xxiv. 18, 24, 25.—“And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the Lord, in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. . . . So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for *fifty shekels of silver* (compare 1 Chron. xxi. 25). And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and *offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings.*”

Priests, indeed, are only mentioned in two or three passages, in all of which their position is clearly seen to be subordinate, and their influence very small indeed, as compared with that to which Samuel had laid claim, and it would appear that the priests of those days were very few, perhaps not more than two at a time.

2 SAM. xx. 25.—“And Sheva was scribe; and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests.”

In a word, there is nothing at all *Levitical* in the older narrative, not a word in the whole of it about Levites, nor about anything *Levitical*, but a natural continuation of the old, simple, and personal worship of Jehovah, as we have seen it under the judges; a continuation also of the semi-barbarous and unsettled state of the tribes, who were but slowly becoming united as a nation. David's reign was on the whole victorious and prosperous; but as it was long disturbed by civil war at its commencement, so it was afterwards rudely shaken by two other civil wars; the first caused by the formidable and deep-laid rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 10-14), and the second by the revolt of the ten tribes under Sheba (2 Sam. xx. 1, 2, 22).

In this narrative we have also the account of a famine, which seems to have immediately followed these disturbances.

2 SAM. xxi. 1.—“Then there was a famine in the days of

David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."

In order to atone for this old crime, which is nowhere else recorded, seven grandsons of Saul were put to death.

2 SAM. xxi. 9.—"And he (David) delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them up in the hill *before the Lord*: and they fell all seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest."

We must remark how nearly this resembles a human sacrifice, the indication of the victims by divination, the motive of the sacrifice as an "*atonement*" for crime (ver. 3), to avert a great national evil, and the "hanging up" (vulgate, "*crucifying*") "*before the Lord*," in the hill or high place at Gibeon, of which we elsewhere read:—

1 KINGS iii. 4.—"And the king (Solomon) went to *Gibeon* to sacrifice there, for that was *the great high place*."

Strange that David's recent crime, in the matter of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. xi. 15, 27), is not regarded as the cause of the calamity, nor David's inhuman cruelty to the conquered Ammonites (2 Sam. xii. 31). Strange that the famine was not attributed to the sin or folly of the people in the two civil wars which immediately preceded it, and which may have even been its natural producing cause. Strange that the *nation* should now be punished with famine for the sin committed many years before by Saul; but strangest of all, that the innocent grandsons should be sacrificed thus as an atonement for the crime of their ancestor. We would rather not more particularly notice how dishonouring to God was such a sacrifice; but we must observe that in this matter David's standard of morality was far below that which is afterwards attributed to his descendant Amaziah.

2 KINGS xiv. 6.—"But the children of the murderers he

slew not: according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein 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; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin." (Deut. xxiv. 16.)

It would appear that these seven were all the surviving descendants of Saul except one.

2 SAM. xxi. 7.—“But *the king spared* Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the Lord's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.”

2 SAM. ix. 13.—“So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was *lame on both his feet.*”

There is ample ground for supposing, that Mephibosheth may have been as much indebted to his lameness, as to the oath of David, for the clemency extended to him; seeing that David's oath to Saul was insufficient to protect those who might have become David's rivals.

1 SAM. xxiv. 21, 22.—“Swear now therefore unto me by the Lord, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. And David sware unto Saul.”

According to the earlier narrative, every incident of David's history only serves to fill up the picture of him, as a rude, warlike, and cruel king; whose grand merit was that he was at length victorious over all his enemies, and that he worshipped no other god but Jehovah. His last dying words to Solomon, his successor, bear witness to the spirit that was in him stronger than death.

1 KINGS ii, 8-10.—“And, behold thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword (2 Sam. xix. 16-23). Now therefore

hold him not guiltless ; for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou *oughtest* to do unto him ; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood. So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David."

As represented by this authority, David's worship was as unlevitical, and his character at least as immoral, as those of any wicked king in the whole history ; but it does not appear that his irregularities were known to be defects by the historian :

1 KINGS xv. 5.—"Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite."

So that, with the exception of this one great sin, David's life and worship, as portrayed in the books of Samuel and Kings, must be regarded as fairly exhibiting the standard of religion and of morality in his time, and in the time of the writer, or writers, of this history. But, if we now turn to the book of Chronicles, we find that, both with regard to worship and to manners, the standard has become very different, and that David's piety and prosperity are alike greatly magnified. Here there is no record of the civil wars and rebellions, nor of the murders of Ishbosheth and of Abner, nor of the sacrifice of the grandsons of Saul, nor of the legacy of treacherous revenge which was bequeathed to Solomon ; but the last words recorded of David are pious and devotional (1 Chron. xxix. 19, 20), and Bathsheba is only once mentioned, not as the adulterous wife of Urijah, but as the mother of Solomon and the *daughter of Ammiel* (1 Chron. iii. 5). David is *here* represented, as reigning over all Israel, in uninterrupted triumph, without domestic strife, or taint of immorality, all the time from the death of Saul to the accession of Solomon. In *this* account David no longer appears ignorant or indifferent about Levitical matters. Besides the appointment of nearly a thousand Levites for the service of the ark, when it

was first brought up to the City of David, we read of extensive preparations for the building of the temple (1 Chron. xxii., xxix.); and of a vast multitude of Levitical arrangements for the future temple service.

1 CHRON. xxiii. 1-5.—“ So, when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel, and he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites. Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upwards; and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand. Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the Lord; and six thousand were officers and judges. Moreover, four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the Lord, with the instruments which I made (said David) to praise therewith, &c., &c.”

The contrast between the two pictures, when thus compared, is so very glaring, that it is absolutely impossible to give both writers credit for accurate information and fidelity to truth; especially when we find, that their statements not only differ, but even contradict each other. If we remember that David was emphatically an *early* king; and, if we consider the rude material out of which the nation was growing, as that material is shown to us in the books of Judges and of Samuel; we cannot fail to conclude that the earlier narrative, being nearer in point of time, as well as simpler and more primitive in its description, has a much greater semblance and probability of truth, than the later one—in which we have constantly present, a manifest partiality; and, constantly reflected, the full-blown Levitism or Sacerdotalism of a much later age. There is internal evidence, that the books of Chronicles were written after the Babylonish Captivity.

1 CHRON. ix. 1.—“ So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, *who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.*”

And so far as we know, commentators are agreed in regarding these books as written under the direction, if not by the hand, of Ezra the scribe ; who ruled in Jerusalem just *six hundred years* after David.

EZRA vii. 10, 12.—“ For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. . . . Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven. . . . ”

On the other hand, there is both internal and external evidence that the earlier narrative has been compiled, not without some editorial touches, from the successive records of contemporary prophets, Samuel, Nathan, Gad, (1 Chron. xxix. 29), Ahijah, Iddo, (2 Chron. ix. 29), Shemaiah, (2 Chron. xii. 15), Jehu, (2 Chron. xx. 34), and Isaiah, (2 Chron. xxvi. 22).

Seeing that it is impossible to believe two entirely different, and often contradictory, histories, we are compelled either to reject them both, or to make a selection, and to prefer that which appears to be the more genuine ; being written nearer, in point of time, to the events recorded, and possessing the more inherent probability. It seems to be indubitable that the earlier narrative contains, throughout, a much more truthful representation than the later. But can we not also discern the motive and purpose of the difference ? The early writers appear to have recorded their own impressions of events which they witnessed, or which happened in their own time ; while the later historian had a more complicated task. He had before him a code of laws, purporting to have come down from remote antiquity ; with which, therefore, the ancient history of his nation, and especially of its pious kings, *must* be made to harmonize, and this is just the task which the Chronicler, according to his lights, and to the best of his ability, has endeavoured to accomplish. These very discrepancies, therefore, and the uniform sacerdotal bias, which is manifest in them all, are in themselves proofs, that the author of Chronicles was

acquainted with the Mosaic law, which to the authors of the earlier books was unknown; and if so, the law must have been produced, or greatly developed, *between the dates* of the two writings.

Neither David nor his prophets knew that it was unlawful for the king to have many wives; or the prophet Nathan, speaking in God's name, would not have ignored this law.

2 SAM. xii. 7, 8.—“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom.”

2 SAM. v. 13.—“And David took him more concubines and wives, out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron.”

DEUT. xvii. 17.—“Neither shall he multiply wives unto himself, that his heart turn not away.”

David must have been ignorant also of the law that, for any one but a priest of the family of Aaron, to presume to offer sacrifice was a crime to be punished with death.

NUM. xviii. 7.—“Therefore thou and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for everything of the altar, and within the veil, and ye shall serve; I have given your priest's office unto you as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.”

We have direct proof that neither Samuel, David, nor any of the kings ever observed the feast of tabernacles, and we cannot attribute this neglect to ignorance of an *existing* law on the part of men who were led and taught by direct communications from heaven; nor to the wilful disobedience of those whose piety is recorded with unqualified approbation.

NEHEM. viii. 14, 17, 18.—“And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths, in the feast of the seventh month (Lev. xxiii. 34 and 42). And all the congregation, of them that were come again out of the captivity,

made booths, and sat under the booths: for, *since the days of Jeshua*, the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness. Also, day by day, from the first day unto the last, he read in the book of the law of God."

We have seen that David did not know the law, that children should not be put to death for the sin of their fathers; and, according to the history, he must have been a worshipper, or at least must have allowed the worship, of the brazen serpent, to which incense was burned, until it was destroyed by king Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 4). So far we have positive proof that David was ignorant of the law; but, as might be expected from the nature of the case, the negative evidence of his ignorance is more abundant, and must be regarded as equally conclusive. We find in David's history not a single trace of the passover, of the tithes, of the jubilee, of the Sabbatical year, nor of the reading of the law to the people every seventh year, as Ezra did in the feast of tabernacles, (Deut. xxxi. 10, 11). Strangest of all, we find no recognition of the Sabbath day, save only once, when the word '*Sabbaths*' occurs in the *later* book.

1 CHRON. xxiii. 31.—"And to offer all burnt-sacrifices unto the Lord, in the *Sabbaths*, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them."

From all this we think it clearly appears that David, the 'man after God's own heart,' so far as can be judged from his history, was not guided by the Mosaic Law.

There is a great difficulty in the way of adducing evidence from the Psalms, because there is so much uncertainty and difference of opinion, as to the various authorship and dates of these poetical writings. It is manifest that some of them were written after the return from Babylon (Psalm cxxxvii. 1); so that the times of their production must have extended over at

least six hundred years ; and it is well known that the titles prefixed to some of them, are in many cases of doubtful authority ; there being even internal evidence that psalms inscribed with the name of David were written at a much later time (Psalm xiv. 7). It is, on this account, all the more remarkable, that in *none* of the Psalms is there any allusion to the Sabbath day ; and that in none which can, on any grounds, be ascribed to David or to his time, is there anything at all Levitical ; nor any allusion to the manifold observances of the ceremonial law. In a few of the psalms, to which an early date is attributed, laws, precepts, and commandments are referred to (Psalm xix. 8 and 9) ; but, when we consider how very indefinite these expressions are, and how uncertain is the authorship or date of any particular psalm, it must be felt that such instances have no weight at all against the mass of historical evidence which we have reviewed. We are informed that Samuel wrote a book of laws, which David would doubtless regard as divine. We may assume that David also had the two tables of stone, which Solomon afterwards found in the ark. We cannot doubt that David himself felt or believed that he enjoyed direct guidance and instruction from God ; and these considerations may sufficiently explain his devotional admiration for God's law ; but we think it is clear, beyond the possibility of doubt, that David had not *that* book of the law which Hilkipah discovered, which Ezra obeyed, and which has been transmitted to us. It is, however, abundantly evident, both from the history and from the psalms, that David worshipped and promoted the worship of Jehovah alone ; and that by his example and influence in this respect ; by his bringing the ark to a temporary building in his new capital ; and by leaving his son Solomon in wealth and prosperity ; he prepared the way for the building of the temple, for the institution of the temple service,

and for the establishment of the hierarchy of priests and Levites; who, to magnify their office, to increase their emoluments, to extend their power, and, in a word, to imitate Samuel, began immediately to build that edifice of sacerdotalism, which we now have before us in the 'Mosaic Law.'

I trust that I have been able to lay before my readers such a view of the history of Samuel and of David, as is fitted to throw no small amount of light on the question as to the alleged early date and Mosaic authorship of the book which Hilkiyah discovered or produced.

CHAPTER VII.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

HAVING now passed in review the history of Judah anterior to the finding of the book, through all its stages, extending back to the pre-historic and legendary beginnings of the national existence, we have only briefly to retrace and summarize the argument, in order that we may the more clearly discern the conclusion to which it points. In the earliest period which preceded the opening of the continuous history, and which lay very near to the ostensible date of the great lawgiver, we should naturally expect the book of the law to have occupied a prominent place, and to be recognised by the notice of its observance, or else of its guilty neglect, in every incident recorded; instead of which, it is precisely in this period that no trace whatever of the law can be found, not even in its germ. There is in this long time not the slightest suggestion of the exclusive right of the family of Aaron to minister at the altar, nor any trace of such a right having ever before been asserted. The wor-

ship which the religious men of that age offered to God with manifest and conscious acceptance was the very same as that which the law afterwards denounced as impious, and as meriting the punishment of death.

So far as we can judge, this primitive worship seems to have been purer and more spiritual than that by which it was succeeded. The judges did not dance before the ark, nor offer their sacrifices to it; images or symbols were not always employed; no special worthiness was ascribed to any one particular image, nor was it considered necessary to bring the sacrifice before any image, nor to any particular place.

What the distinctive office of the priest was in those early times, the history does not show, and therefore it can only be surmised. Clearly it was not strictly peculiar nor exclusive, but probably consisted in offering combined sacrifices for people who were too poor, or too ignorant, or who otherwise felt themselves unworthy or unfit to approach God on their own account; but certainly it did not at all exclude nor supersede the right of every man to be his own priest, and to worship God when, where, and how he chose, without the intervention of any mediator.

In all probability, however, the exercise of this natural right was generally confined to the chieftains or leading men, or to a few of the bolder or more enlightened minds, while the common people would, as a rule, resort to the ministry of the priests. Both priests and people in such a case would almost inevitably regard the independent worship of the few, with some degree of jealousy, as savouring of presumption. Now, what changes might naturally be expected to follow when the priest's office became combined with that of the supreme magistrate? Exactly those which the history records. The exclusive rights and privileges of the priesthood were then asserted and vindicated, and the superstitious

reverence for the particular symbols or images employed by the priest in his worship was greatly increased.

When the monarchy was instituted a conflict was unavoidable. It was simply impossible for Saul to be king, and to submit to the insolent arrogance of Samuel; but the people were determined to be governed by a king, and so the proud priest was compelled to submit, but submitted under a solemn and vigorous protest; and though the high aims and claims which had been asserted for the priesthood had long to remain in various degrees of abeyance, they were never abandoned nor lost sight of by Samuel's successors in office. Neither David nor Solomon yielded anything like the same degree of submission to the priesthood, as that which had been yielded by Saul and rejected as insufficient by Samuel; but the building of the temple and the establishment of its regular priesthood laid the foundation of a new power, whose progress and growth through many vicissitudes coincided exactly with the gradual development of the Levitical law, as may be clearly traced through the several stages of the history.

We are far from supposing that the policy of the priests was instigated only by their desire for the aggrandizement of their own order. Doubtless they had also a zeal towards God, and believed sincerely that His honour and glory were bound up with their own dignity and prosperity as a church, and that He could be truly and acceptably worshipped only through their ordained ministry, and only by the rites and ceremonies of the temple service at Jerusalem. Strange as seems the combination of human pride with religious zeal, it has been far too common to be surprising. So far, indeed, from being extraordinary, it has been exemplified in every age, and in every country, varying only in degree, according to the ignorance or enlightenment of the people, and accord-

ing to the various predominance of independent thought or of superstitious credulity.

We are thus restrained from utterly condemning, and even from greatly wondering at the course taken by the temple priesthood, in teaching first, that God could be worshipped under no other name, and by no other symbols than those which they employed; second, that they, the priests, were the mediators through whom alone God could be approached with acceptance; and third, that their temple at Jerusalem was the only place in all the world where acceptable worship could be offered to God.

These doctrines were not of simultaneous growth. The *first* was undoubtedly believed by David, while the other two were unknown or disregarded. Although the *second* had been held and maintained by Samuel, it was manifestly set aside by all the early kings, and the first clear instance of its resuscitation is not found till the reign of Uzziah, when the priest again rebuked the king for presuming to offer sacrifice. The *third* must have been entirely unknown even to Samuel, by whom it was habitually transgressed. It seems to have been very long a matter of zealous and jealous ambition to the priesthood, because in each successive reign we are told that even when the king was pious and orthodox in other things, "Nevertheless, the high places were *not* taken away;" and as this occurs chiefly in the earlier narrative, we may, perhaps, infer that the advocates of this new doctrine had very long tried to obtain for it the sanction and authority of the civil power before they were able to succeed. It was not till the third reformation under Hezekiah that this doctrine became law. When local worship was prohibited the high places were destroyed, and the people were compelled to bring all their sacrifices and offerings to the temple at Jerusalem. These three doctrines may be regarded as the heads under which nearly all the minor provi-

sions of the Levitical law may be distributed. From the *first* it followed, as a matter of course, that to worship or acknowledge the God or gods of any other nation in the world was rank heresy and idolatry. From the *second*, it necessarily resulted that as the numbers and needs of the priesthood increased, a permanent and liberal provision must be made for their support in dignity and independence. The *third* led, in the first place, to the legal institution of the great national festivals at Jerusalem, and afterwards to the enactment of a multiplicity of sacrifices, ceremonies, and observances, in order that each of the many priests employed about the one temple might have some appointed duty or position, that their sacred office might in all respects be magnified, and that they might have as frequently as possible occasion to receive contributions from the people, no rule being more frequently insisted on than that none should appear before the Lord empty. Whatever the priests taught, it was, of course, condemnable heresy to doubt; but it does not at all follow that they formed either for themselves or for others any such theories of plenary inspiration as those which have been applied to their writings by modern divines, nor can we suppose that their infallibility was at any time during the monarchy undoubted, though it may at times have appeared irresistible. Absolute intolerance seems to have produced submission and external conformity, and must have also tended to weaken the very faculty of private judgment in the people. But the fact that so many were always eager to throw off the yoke of orthodoxy, whenever the liberty to do so was accorded them, proves undeniably that, though all open heresy or dissent might be effectually smothered or crushed by intolerance, yet private scepticism and differences of opinion must always have been very widespread and lively.

Historical accuracy and critical analysis are entirely

modern acquirements ; and are still, with very rare exceptions, only beginning to be understood. That a historian is guilty of dishonesty, in colouring, or concealing, or adding to the ascertained facts, is an idea, such as would probably never be conceived, by priests or by people, among the ancient Jews, nor among the ancient Britons. We suppose that the priestly historian would not only consider himself to be at liberty, but would even regard it as his duty, so to write, as to magnify the goodness and the glory of the orthodox kings, priests, and heroes, to confirm and illustrate the doctrines taught by himself and by his order ; and to exhibit all that might be unfavourable to these worthy ends, in the smallest or most adverse light.

It would be difficult to find, anywhere, a clearer example, or a more conclusive proof of this want of the notion of accuracy, than is to be seen in the placing of the books of Chronicles, side by side with those of Samuel and of Kings, in the sacred canon ; and in the fact that both narratives have been read by millions, and read many times, without any discernment of their incongruities and contradictions ; either by the Jewish Priests and Rabbis who included them both in their Bible ; or by the vast majority of readers, ancient and modern. These considerations may help us, in some measure, to understand how it was, that, when Hilkiyah announced his discovery of the book, containing, as it did, many old and well known laws, legends, customs, and religious rites, combined with many new additions and enlargements, a critical examination was not the test, which, even ostensibly, it was thought necessary to apply to his production ; and how the oracular deliverance of Huldah the prophetess, being declared sufficient, by the king and by the priests, was by the people received as infallible and conclusive proof, when backed by such authority, that the book

which had been found was indeed what it professed to be, "the book of the law of the Lord given by Moses."

I have a strong conviction that the arguments deducible from the historic books, which I have *endeavoured* to lay before my readers, are amply and alone sufficient to prove that the so-called Mosaic law had its growth under the monarchy; and that it was not completed before the reign of Josiah.* If my exhibition of these arguments has failed to produce conviction; the fault, I believe, must lie in the weakness and inefficiency of my statement, of which I am deeply conscious. It may, however, be necessary to remind some of my readers, that, in the *testimony of the prophets*, and in the *contents of the Pentateuch*, other fields lie open, yielding, even without the aid of Hebrew scholarship, evidence, at least as strong and as abundant, as that which has been here considered, and all pointing to the same inevitable conclusion, that the belief, hitherto regarded as orthodox, in the Mosaic authorship, and early date of the Levitical law, has been, after all, a popular delusion.

The immediate effect, and much of the purpose of Hilkiah's discovery, was greatly to increase and to confirm the power of the priests; and to multiply their exactions from the people. Tithes, first-fruits, trespass-offerings, thank-offerings, and others, were now enforced by the law. The first-born son, and the first-born of all cattle, were either

* I have not at all entered upon the question, as to whether or not the finding of the book was the *final and complete* development of the Levitical law, as it has been transmitted to us. The dogma of infallibility may not even then have been so clearly conceived and defined, as to prevent the possibility of *later* alterations and additions. Some of the evidence here adduced, (for instance the quotation from Nehemiah on page 124), seems to suggest this; but at present I express no opinion on the subject, further than that the Pentateuch as we have it was *not completed before* the reign of Josiah; and this is what I hope that I have demonstrated.

to be given up, or else to be redeemed with money, according to fixed rules and rates (Lev. xxvii. 3); and innumerable ceremonial observances and purifications were made legally binding, in most of which the services of the priesthood were indispensable. Life would thus be rendered intolerable to any man who should forfeit the favour of the priests; and we can understand how the apostle Peter appealed only to the well-known and universal sentiment of his hearers, when he described the whole system as an intolerable yoke, which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear (Acts xv. 10); and how the apostle Paul referred to the same as a "yoke of bondage" (Gal. v. 1-3).

Doubtless there would be sceptics when this law was promulgated; but we should scarcely expect their scepticism to be recorded by the orthodox historians, or motives of prudence may have sufficed entirely to prevent them from uttering their doubts. Those were not the times for asserting with impunity the rights of private judgment, and of religious equality. Small chance for dissenters when the priests were in power, and when the covenant of intolerance was to be renewed!

Yet we may hear the voice of at least one bold *Protestant* sounding still, over the long intervening ages, if we will but listen to distinguish what he says.

Jeremiah was a prophet in Judea, if not in Jerusalem, at the very time of Hilkiah's great discovery.

JEREM. i. 1-3.—"The words of Jeremiah, . . . to whom the word of the Lord came, in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, in the thirteenth year of his reign. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah."

And, surely, *he* was no enemy of the truth; but, in Jeremiah's prophecies, we find not the slightest recognition, much less any triumphant proclamation, of the sacred treasure, the book of the law, which was in his days brought to light. On the contrary,

we may learn from the scorn and indignation with which he *invariably* speaks of the priests, his contemporaries, that he was utterly opposed to the policy of ambition and selfish aggrandizement, which seems to have been a large ingredient in their religious zeal. In other words, Jeremiah was a PROTESTANT.

JEREM. i. 18.—“Behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, *against the priests* thereof, and against the people of the land.”

JEREM. iii. 15, 16.—“I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it, neither shall that be done any more. (*Marginal reading, Neither shall it be magnified any more.*)”

JEREM. vi. 13.—“From the least of them even unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the *priest*, every one dealeth falsely.”

JEREM. vii. 4, 11, 21, 22.—“Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are these.

“Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold even I have seen it, saith the Lord.

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices.”

JEREM. viii. 8.—“How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly *the false pen of the scribes worketh for falsehood.*” (*Marginal reading.*)

JEREM. xviii. 18.—“Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; *for the law shall not perish from the priest*, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet; come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”

JEREM. xx. 1, 2.—“Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, *who was also chief governor in the house of the Lord*, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord.”

JEREM. xxiii. 11.—“For both prophet and *priest* are profane; yea, in my house, have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord.”

LAM. iv. 13.—“For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her *priests*, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her.”

From this constant antagonism it is clear that Jeremiah would not expect himself to be regarded as belonging to the party of the priesthood; and we can well understand the reason why he was not so regarded by them, and why they did not think of asking for *his* opinion or suggestions on the subject of their great discovery. Or perhaps Jeremiah was not then at Jerusalem, and his absence would be most opportune; but with Huldah the case was different, and her counsel might be relied upon. With Huldah the prophetess they communed, when sent by the king to inquire of God. Jeremiah, however, gave his opinion unsought; and happily it remains on record, to open our eyes, even at the present day!—

JEREM. v. 30, 31.—“A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; *the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means*; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?”

CHAPTER VIII.

REFLECTIONS AND INFERENCES.

The evidence from the historical books of the Bible, which in the foregoing chapters has been collected

and compared, exhibits, unless I have greatly failed in my presentation of it, how utterly false and unworthy of an enlightened people is the *superstition*, that the entire Bible is the Holy, Authoritative, Infallible Word of God.

Training, tradition, custom, and prejudice are powerful influences, and the sentiments which are nourished and appealed to by these are proverbially difficult to overcome; but no one can doubt or refuse to admit that *the love of truth* is infinitely nobler and purer than any of these, and that *this* ought to be our supreme rule and guide, never outrivalled nor controlled by any other sentiment, in moulding our intellectual conclusions. The vast majority of men, however, seem to have been so trained as to make the love of truth entirely subordinate, in their minds, to various other sentiments. Multitudes are thus so blinded with the veil of emotional attachment or traditional submission to a standard of supreme external authority, as to put darkness for light and light for darkness,—calling evil good, and good evil,—falsehood truth, and truth falsehood; being all the time wise in their eyes and prudent in their own sight. (Isaiah v. 20, 21.)

The *possibility* of honestly and sincerely yielding this submission of the intellect is not easily realized by those whose minds are free, but, having long experienced it, I know that it is a reality; and therefore I am very far from thinking that all who still acknowledge the veil are dishonest or insincere in doing so.

MICAH vi. 8—“*God hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*”

All real instruction, in the Bible and out of it, proceeds on the assumption that we have the faculty given us by God, but like all our other faculties

requiring cultivation, of judging for ourselves what things are honest, just, pure, lovely, virtuous, and of good report ; else it would be useless and absurd to bid us think on these things, (Phil. iv. 8). It must, therefore, be either hypocrisy or delusion to profess a belief that God is infinitely perfect in power, wisdom, justice, goodness, holiness, and truth, while at the same time, or even in the same breath, thoughts, words, and actions are attributed to Him, which, if we dare to weigh them in the balance of our reason, God's gift for our guidance, are necessarily judged to be of an entirely opposite character.

To believe the written or spoken assertion of prophet, priest, or layman, ancient or modern, that GOD has willed or said or done anything which to our reason appears false, evil, or capricious, is to believe man rather than God,—it is to put darkness for light, and light for darkness,—and it is directly opposed to the *spirit* of the Gospel, even when it may seem to be in accordance with its *letter*; for it upholds bondage, and darkness, and fear, instead of liberty, light, and love ; and renders impossible the worship of *Our Father* in spirit and in truth.

God is not a man that He should lie. He abideth faithful, and cannot deny Himself. It must be instructive, it can do no harm, and cannot be wrong, to search out, to consider, and to compare whatever men, in any age, have seriously thought or said or written concerning God and His dealings with our race. But to believe that God has left us to grope for all our knowledge of Him among the Biblical records, various, incongruous, and often contradictory, of ancient oriental opinions and superstitions, savours quite as much of anti-christian infidelity as does the creed of the Parsee, the Brahmin, or the Buddhist ; because all these alike involve ignorance or disbelief of the direct and immediate revelation, which God is ever making to and in ourselves, of His constant

presence, power, goodness, and truth, in and over all His works.

The Roman Catholic is required, and professes to make an entire surrender of his private judgment to the authority of the church or of the Pope. For him, the question, What is truth? is only another form of expression for, What does the Pope teach?

The very orthodox, among those who call themselves Protestants, yield the same submission to the doctrines of the Bible; and, with them, the question, What is truth? is reverently made subordinate to the enquiry, What does the Bible teach? If the utterance of the Bible is regarded as clear and indisputable; then, beyond controversy, and without further search, *that* is the truth. But, when the teaching is obscure, or variously interpreted; when conflicting views of the same passage have to be compared; or when apparently conflicting passages have to be weighed against each other; to what tribunal must we appeal? Let us take for example the teaching of the Bible on the subject of slavery.

LEV. xxv. 44, 46.—“Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession: they shall be your bondmen for ever; but over your brethren, the children of Israel, ye shall not rule over one another with rigour.”

So far from being repealed in the New Testament, this law receives everywhere confirmation.

1 TIM. vi. 1—“Let as many servants (*slaves*) as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.”

Recognizing the right of *Philemon* as a slave-owner, Paul sent the converted fugitive Onesimus back to his master; and, in accordance with the law, thus

confirmed and illustrated, the whole christian church continued, for many centuries, not only to tolerate, but to practise and to encourage slavery as a divine institution. The church all along read, just as we do, that other law :—

MAT. vii. 12.—“ All things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them : for this is the law and the prophets.”

But no difficulty was experienced in so explaining this precept that it should not interfere with the old law. Until modern times, the church had no conscience of the sin of enslaving the heathen. What, then, enables us to say that the church was wrong ? Upon what authority have we condemned and abolished slavery, notwithstanding the express terms of the old law, the apostolic sanction, and the example of the early church ? *

Again let us consider those passages, where it is said that evil spirits, or lying spirits, were sent forth by God, with the direct commission to lead men into sin and misery, (see pp. 101, 102) as compared with the New Testament doctrine :—

JAMES i. 13, 14—“ Let no man say, when he is tempted,

* A venerable and learned friend, to whom the manuscript of this essay has been submitted, says in his remarks on this concluding chapter :—“ The only view which I do not quite accept, is that of St. Paul’s dealing with slavery. Slavery is primarily a political institution, as much as despotism. Both are infringements on the rights of man, and contrary to pure morality. But it was not St. Paul’s duty, and it would have been very wrong of him, to have inculcated a doctrine which would have led to a civil war, or one that would have excited a rebellion against Cæsar. His office led him to implant and foster those moral principles, which in time would undermine both slavery and tyranny. The kidnapper *ἀνδραποδιστής* is classed by him amongst the vilest of the vile.” (1 Tim. i. 10.) The truth and justice of these observations I most cordially admit, assuming, as I suppose my friend does, that the Apostle was merely a wise, good, earnest discerner and teacher of the truth as applicable to his own generation ;

I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man ; but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

And let us ask ourselves what guide we follow in determining that the older views are dishonouring to God, and must therefore be rejected, explained away, or ignored as much as possible.

How is it that Christians can contemplate with credulity the frequent commands said to have been given by God to his ancient people, to massacre and destroy, without mercy, man and woman, young and old, infant and suckling, while they would not only regard it as heathenish and blasphemous to attribute such doings, at the present day, to the command of God, but would denounce the spirit of such deeds as diabolical and inhuman ? (1 Sam. xv. 2, 3 ; Josh. x. 28-40, &c.)

Is there any reason why the song of Deborah, or the 109th Psalm, can be read with a kind of mistily explanative approval, having been written three thousand years ago ; while the same sentiments, uttered by a poet of to-day, would be condemned with horror and disgust ? In such cases—and they

or as he describes himself,—“an able minister of the New Testament, *not of the letter but of the spirit*, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” (2 Cor. iii. 6.) But if the *letter* of his writings be regarded as, in every word and sentence, infallibly expressing the mind and will of God, then it appears to me that the apostolic sanction and example may, till the end of the world, be logically quoted, as in fact they have long and largely been, in support of the sinful and accursed institution, and against those who labour for its overthrow, or who encourage and aid the escape of run-away slaves.

My controversy is not with Paul, but with those who place him and other writers of the Bible in a false light, by erroneously ascribing to the language of their writings attributes of infallibility and enduring authority, which they do not claim for themselves, and which belong to God alone.

are very numerous—what is it that enables us to decide that *this* is right, and that *that* is wrong? When two opposite standards thus seem to be set up; or when the doctrines of the Bible are explained in two or more contradictory senses, by different ages, by different churches, or by different men; what is it that enables us to make our choice?

Many there are, as has been said, who have never made any such choice at all, who have never felt themselves called upon to choose, for whom the choice has been made by others, and who are content to receive their faith at second or third hand from those who happen to be their parents, pastors, or teachers, without any question or doubt. In such persons the faculty of private judgment has either never been aroused, or else has been deliberately surrendered at the feet of those believed to have authority. That this submission is not yielded to *authority*, but only to *superior knowledge*, is no real distinction, but one which only serves to blind the mind to the fact of submission. The submission of the Roman Catholic, so far as it is genuine, and not merely external, is also rendered to superior knowledge—to that combination of divine and human wisdom, which he is taught to recognize in the Church, or in its Head. The infallibility of the Pope may be a delusion; but then so may be the superior enlightenment ascribed to other teachers or churches by those Protestants who are content to hold fast that which they are taught, without caring to prove all things for themselves. Even supposing that all Protestant Churches were united into one church of uniform doctrine, such passive submission to its teaching would not, on that account, be the less foolish and injurious; but, when we consider how many and various are the sects and denominations in this country and elsewhere, all calling themselves Protestant, and all professing to derive their doctrines

only from the Bible ; when we reflect that there is not one, even the most fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, about which earnest and learned Protestant men have not greatly differed ; it becomes indeed amazing, to behold with what assured complacency the adherents of each particular creed, church, or party, cherish the conviction that the teaching of *their* teachers alone is right ; and that all others are wrong ; or only right in so far as agreement or resemblance to their own can be traced.

When a man leaves the duty of proving all things to his church, or to his teachers, and rests satisfied, for his own part, with holding fast those things which they tell him are good, then we have the very spirit and essence of Popery ; and, though far from being confined to the Roman Catholic Church, those who are thus described are, in no degree, entitled to the noble name of Protestant. To such men this argument is not addressed.

But to Protestants, to men who admit and assert the right of private judgment, we repeat the question, When the doctrines or statements of the Bible seem doubtful, incongruous, or contradictory, or when its sentiments appear to be unworthy, what is it that, in such cases, enables you to decide that one idea is to be cherished, and that another is to be rejected ; that when the most obvious interpretation is dishonouring to God, it must be set aside for another more worthy, and therefore more true ; that the law of mercy is a guide which we should never cease to follow, while treachery and cruelty are examples to be shunned ; that there must be some mode of explaining away the evil spirits whom God is said to have sent forth to deceive ; and that nothing inconsistent with perfect goodness and holiness can, with truth or propriety, be attributed to God ? Those who regard the Bible as entirely infallible, must look in vain to it for a settlement of these points. No part of it can reasonably be em-

ployed by such persons to cancel another part. No higher authority can consistently be ascribed by them to one passage than to another. Everything contained in it must be alike true; and a true representation of the mind or will of God, must remain for ever true of Him who is unchangeable.

How, then, does the Bible-Protestant deliver himself from the necessity of believing that God is likely to send forth lying spirits, specially commissioned, to lure us to destruction; that Deborah's inspired song should be our standard of morality, being a picture of such conduct as God looks on with approval; and that slavery of the heathen is a divine institution? These doctrines are not rejected on the authority of the Bible; but are brought by the Protestant before an independent tribunal, where, being weighed in the balance, they are found wanting. What tribunal is that? Where is the court of appeal? The questions are settled: they do not remain open: the replies are not given doubtfully, but are very decided, and are felt to be true. Whence do they come? Where does this authority reside, whose teaching is so clearly beyond all dispute? Beyond all controversy, this REVELATION of God's eternal unchangeable law can only be read in the moral sentiment of each individual Protestant, in that consciousness of the Divine to which his mind has attained, in his faculty of discernment, sharpened and quickened by the love of truth, or blunted and crippled by its neglect—enlightened by knowledge, or darkened by ignorance.

JAMES i. 16, 17.—“Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

What dark superstitions, what innumerable deeds of horrid cruelty, done by sincerely pious Christians, have had for their voucher and warrant the law, “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live!” (Ex. xxii.

18.) Why do we not still burn witches? Why have they become so rare among us? Why do we no longer believe in the reality of their power? The answer is not to be found in the Bible; and the Bible did not produce the change of opinion. The answer is, Because superstition is the sister of ignorance; and the change has been produced by the diffusion of knowledge, elevating so far the faculty of discernment, that men have seen, and do see, clear over the top of the old law, "Put them to death."

I have referred only to a few of those old errors, from which the *veil of authority*, which sheltered and maintained them, has already been removed, and to the corresponding truths which, by this removal of the veil, have been clearly REVEALED to us as a nation, so that about them there is now among us scarcely any doubt or difference of opinion; although the agreement was formerly at least as unanimous on the wrong side; the errors having been taught as truth by the clergy and the Church, because apparently sanctioned by the Bible. I think, however, that a little self-examination will convince every Bible-Protestant that his own conscience or moral sense must sit in judgment on *every* doctrine of the Bible, before that doctrine can be truly and intelligently believed; and that, when the verdict is adverse, as it sometimes is, the doctrine in question must be rejected, reduced, or turned aside, by some more or less convenient explanation. This is the test which everything, to be believed, must pass, before it can be accepted as true. The sharpness and completeness of the test must, of course, depend upon the degree of enlightened discernment which is exercised by each individual. The faculty of discerning what we may, and what we may not believe, like all our other faculties, may be cultivated or neglected; and we cannot think that it was ever

possessed by any man in such a perfect degree as to be incapable of further cultivation.

This, then, is the final tribunal, to which the Bible-Protestant must constantly, though perhaps unconsciously, appeal; and surely the integrity and accuracy of its jurisdiction ought ever to be jealously guarded and cultivated, with a view to its further improvement and extension. We believe it is fair and correct to say that the Bible-Protestant considers it his duty to believe any doctrine or statement so soon as he believes that it is taught in the Bible, except those which he may discern to be in themselves false or unworthy, or to involve contradictions, and which must therefore be set aside or explained away.

From this degree of submission, it would seem to result that, while the doctrine or doctrines, the faith of which constitutes the religion of the soul, are really discerned to be true, the Spirit of God, bearing witness with the human spirit, so that the truth is not only believed but felt and realized, there are, at the same time, many other doctrines, laws, and historical statements, which lie remote from the centre of religious life, and which, being more or less consciously regarded as non-essential, receive at best a hazy and passive assent, very different indeed from discerning belief. While some have, doubtless, fully realized this distinction for themselves, and while we may be sure that in the faith of very many pious and simple believers, who have been awakened to spiritual life, this distinction is unconsciously drawn, it cannot be doubted that, for multitudes far more numerous, no such distinction exists. In their case the haze of uncertainty, which encompasses the manifold outlying stories, doctrines, mysteries, and explanations, completely envelopes and obscures the brightness of the central truths, which might be the sources of light and life, but from which the soul is thus excluded and cut off.

This I take to be the commonest of all cases, among nominal Christians of the age in which we live; persons who acknowledge the authority of the Bible, and who assent to its doctrines, because they are *its* doctrines, without ever having felt the truth in their hearts; without knowing what it is to be led by the Spirit to the discernment of spiritual truth. Such are the persons who *suppose* they believe, who *hope* they believe, who *wish* to believe, who *struggle* to believe, who *pray for grace* to believe, and who sometimes even *believe* that they believe, while all the time there is no light, no shining of the truth in its brightness and power, to regenerate, while it subdues the soul. The numerous and complicated mass of non-essentials, claiming to rest on the same authority as the one or two essential truths, become woven together with these into a tangled web, where the threads of gold are inextricably lost, while, but for the multitude of cloudy twisted threads, they would shine with unmistakable clearness.

It is difficult to imagine that any sane man believes absolutely nothing about God, or about our relations to Him; and yet, unless I am greatly mistaken, there are very many who will experience a strange and surprising difficulty, if they will set themselves, earnestly, to find an answer to the question, which I beg every reader to put to himself, who has not already done so: What do I truly believe, *exclusive of all that I merely wish or hope to believe?*

So many things, of equal authority, have all along been *assented to*, that, in all probability, no such distinction has ever been drawn; and, in the case of thousands, the one general belief, which is really something more than a passive assent, on the subject of religion, is, that all its doctrines and histories are entirely beyond human comprehension, and that, therefore, their truth cannot, without Divine assistance, be discerned, but that we are, nevertheless, bound to

believe them all because they are in the Bible, so that we are guilty of sin if we fail or refuse to do so.

I am greatly mistaken if I have not fairly described the most common of all experiences, at the present time, among those whom, as defined above, I have designated Bible-Protestants. These are Protestants with a limitation, semi-Protestants, Protestants subject to authority—the authority of the Bible. They understand the precept, “Prove all things,” to mean, “Prove all things according to the Bible,” or, “Prove all things except the Bible;” or “Prove all things for yourselves, except those things which the Bible has proved.”

True Protestantism, however, being a wide and noble sentiment, cannot long rest satisfied with the mere exchange of one standard of authority for another. Protesting against all recognition of authority in matters of faith, it must proceed to declare the *impossibility* of faith being rendered as an act of obedience, and to condemn the apparent or attempted degradation of it as such. Proclaiming the sacred right, and the solemn duty, of every man to prove all things for himself, it must vindicate this right, in matters of religion, against all limitation, by any authority whatsoever. Relying on the Spirit of Truth alone for guidance and enlightenment, while nourishing himself with the best available instruction or spiritual food, the true Protestant refuses to believe, because it is absolutely impossible for him to believe, any doctrine or statement of religion, except those which he, for himself, *discerns to be true*, and, for all the rest, he answers, “I do not know,” or otherwise, according to his lights.

If any man, even a truly pious man, who has not already tried it, will earnestly set himself to ascertain how much of his religious belief will bear this test, how much of it he really *discerns and feels* to be true, he will probably find it, at first, to be a rather puzzling question, and, if he does succeed in giving to him-

self a clear and definite answer, he will most likely be surprised at the simplicity and brevity of the result. This result, whether it be anything or nothing, is all that to him is religion. The man who does not know what it is to discern the truth, and to feel its power in his heart, has no religious faith, and is still blind to spiritual light, although he may be all the time assenting to the most orthodox creed in Christendom.

The man who has religious faith, who does discern the truth, and who feels its power in his soul, to whatever Church or creed he may belong, will find, if he succeeds in drawing the distinction which I have indicated, that the truths, which he has thus made his own, for the support of his spiritual life, are few, grand, simple, and quite apart from the manifold outlying narratives and opinions of his creed; about which, at the same time, perhaps he has no active doubts; or, perhaps, though he may have such doubts, they do not disturb his faith.

The creed of the true Protestant is limited to that which he, for himself, can discern to be true, informing and improving himself by the use of guides and instructors, but allowing no kind of authority to be interposed between his spirit and the Spirit of God, whose teaching he recognises in the very power with which the truth, when discerned, is brought home to his soul, and whose sympathy he realizes in that strong love of truth which he thenceforth cherishes and enjoys.

It is truly lamentable to reflect that such multitudes on all sides are shut out from the knowledge of God and of truth, by those very formulas and standards of religion, which profess to be the vehicles, or even the *only* vehicles of truth; but which carry their precious cargo, so mixed and concealed, amidst a mass of confused incongruities, that only one here and there can discover and experience its regenerating power. To the dogmatism of theology, which has

always been excessive, I unhesitatingly attribute the appalling and unnatural prevalence of indifference and hatred to all religious truth. The discernment of truth is to the soul what sight is to the eye. Neither faculty can be exercised without light, of which God has provided everywhere abundance; but the highest capabilities of either faculty cannot be developed,—its finest perceptions, and most exact discriminations cannot be realized, unless each faculty be trained and strengthened by suitable culture and information, and unless each faculty be kept in constant and vigorous exercise. Either faculty may be perverted, discoloured, or obscured by clouds, veils, or obstacles interposed to modify or to exclude the light.

The mode in which God reveals himself to the human soul has been well described by a recent commentator as follows:—

“The great and eternal One *reveals* himself *through and by man*, in conformity with the gradual development of the human mind. The growth of man’s apprehension of God marks the progress of revelation. The *divine* in man,—that which allies him to the omniscient—unfolds itself in harmony with the law of its nature, giving expression to itself in sensuous forms. God speaks to man, or man speaks of God, agreeably to the era described or the idiosyncrasy of the writer. A knowledge of the Supreme *more or less imperfect* characterises such communications. The communications are *human*; but they are also *divine*, as being the utterances of the divine in man *at the time*. They are, in short, a *divine revelation*. . . . When it is taught and received for orthodox, that God only revealed himself to men in former times, by certain occasional and external miracles, and that our knowledge of Him is limited to what has been written down of such communications, we have reason to fear that we have too little sense that God is *always actively*

present with us now, and to suspect that our belief is mechanical, sceptical, and superstitious at once."*

When rationally considered, it is nothing short of an absurdity and a contradiction of terms, to say that faith can be rendered as an act of obedience to any authority whatever. Faith is the free exercise of the mind, resting only on the discernment of the truth; just as sight is the free exercise of the eye, resting only on the discernment of light; and no man can possibly believe, in submission to authority, that which he does not discern to be true, any more than he can behold the sun at midnight in obedience to an external command. A man may, indeed, be taught to keep his eyes shut, and by discipline and training may be brought not only to say, but even to fancy that he sees whatever he is told ought to be seen, distrusting his own natural perceptions. A man may also be trained to look only and always through lenses of a prescribed colour and form; and so to disuse and to supersede his unassisted vision. So also may men, yea nations and generations of men, be kept in more or less of ignorance, distrust, and neglect of their own faculty of discerning what is true; and thus be made to surrender, or never to know the right of private judgment; so that even those things which are most thoroughly believed by such men, are believed not because they are conscious of their truth, but because they have the sanction of authority.

This way of regarding faith or belief as an act of obedience, or of submission to authority, is utterly and entirely opposed to the spirit of the Gospel and of Protestantism. The authority of the Church or of the Pope may be denied; but another authority has been set up instead. No living standard of infallibility is recognised; but infallibility is ascribed to a book. The teaching of the Church is no longer

* "Introduction to the Old Testament," by Samuel Davidson, D.D., vol. i., pp. 234, 239.

received, as the end of all truth ; but only as a useful aid toward the knowledge and understanding of that which the Bible teaches. The Bible has for three hundred years been the Pope of those who have called themselves Protestants.

All our knowledge is built upon the foundation of all past ages, its elements having been transmitted to us by history, tradition, and records of all kinds. Without this instruction, derived from our fathers, none of us could for ourselves have attained the knowledge of any kind which we now possess ; but, though our knowledge comes to us, in great measure, by transmission, it never rests alone, nor even chiefly, on the authority by which it is transmitted to us. We might never have discovered the laws of gravitation, or the principles of astronomy, if we had not been taught them ; but so far as any one really knows these things, he believes them, not because he has been taught them, not in submission to the authority of his teachers, but because, and in proportion as, he discerns that they must be true.

So is it also with religion and morality. Our conceptions of God, and our notions of right and wrong, are probably very different from what they would have been, if we had been left to discover, and to evolve them for ourselves, from a state of blank ignorance ; but, in so far as these can be called our own, in so far as we feel that they must be true, they do not rest upon the authority which has transmitted them to us, but upon our own discernment of their truth.

We have said that knowledge never rests alone, nor even chiefly on the testimony of those from whom we receive it ; but there is here an apparent exception or rather a class of apparent exceptions, in which our knowledge seems at first sight to have no other foundation on which to rest but the testimony of our instructors. This is the case, for example, with history,

and especially with ancient history, for our knowledge of which we must often depend entirely upon the writings of historians. Yet even here, the inquirer after truth must use instruction with discernment; must make allowances for party spirit, for popular delusions, for national or peculiar habits of thought, or forms of expression. He must, moreover, be acquainted with all the histories in any degree relating to the subject of enquiry; and must scrutinise, test, and compare these authorities with each other, in order that he may, from a comprehensive view of the whole evidence, form an impartial judgment. The judgments, so formed, vary from total uncertainty or mere probability, to a strong presumption or absolute conviction, according to the nature, character, and amount of the evidence.

The result is at best a judicial decision, and must in every case be consciously held subject to modification or reversal by the always possible discovery of further evidence. So far as the decision becomes knowledge to the inquirer, it rests upon his discernment of its truth. He believes not in obedient submission to any nor to all of his authorities, but in accordance with the independent judgment of his own mind, and may very often have good reasons for remaining doubtful and incredulous, even when there is no conflict of authority. All history remains constantly open to revision and correction, so that it has of late become a proverb, that history requires, from time to time, to be re-written. Hence there are, and always have been, great diversities of opinion regarding it; the same evidence being very variously estimated or interpreted by different minds.

It seems like a mere truism to say that history cannot be religion; that even the history of religion cannot be spiritual truth, and that spiritual truth cannot be proved in the same way that historical facts can, just as the reverse would be equally true.

No amount of historical evidence would now suffice to prove that witches rode through the air on broomsticks; that they and all heretics ought to be burned; that finger-bones or napkins from the body of a saint had the power of working miracles (Acts xix. 12); or that the earth is a flat extended fixture, over which the sun daily moves;—for all of which, and for many other such things, there was abundant evidence to satisfy our forefathers.

All our sentiments and faculties may be crippled, or largely developed, according as they are neglected or cultivated. The sentiments of liberty, of beauty, and of music, have varied much in strength and character from age to age, and their growth or decline may be traced, not only in persons at different times, but through the history of nations and of centuries. The enlightened views of justice, and the refinements of taste and skill, which one age may attain to, are ever owing, in a large degree, to the culture, knowledge, and many other circumstances, inherited from the preceding ages. So is it with the sentiment of truth. For its cultivation instruction is required, and can only be derived, as in other matters, from teachers of various kinds, or in other words, from the transmitted wisdom and attainments of the past.

Our knowledge of religious truth comes to us partly by transmission, as does our knowledge of scientific truth; but in the one case, as in the other, it does not become knowledge by virtue of the authority which transmits it, but only by our own discernment of its inherent truth. The faculty of discernment in art, science, and religion, alike, may be sharpened and strengthened, perhaps without limit, certainly without known limit, by diligent exercise, and by the cultivation of the corresponding sentiments, which, again, are nourished and increased by each new acquisition of knowledge.

There is nothing so well fitted to stimulate and elevate the artist's ideas and conceptions of the beautiful and the excellent in his art, as an intelligent acquaintance with its history, and a correct appreciation of the various stages of progress or of decline through which it has had to pass before reaching its present condition. The comparative estimate which this historical knowledge enables him to form of the merits and influences of different ages and of different schools, will, more than anything else, assist him to discern the elements of perfection after which he strives. He derives inspiration from history.

The statesmen, who has made politics the study of his life, and who seeks to discover the wisest and best measures of legislation, must be very ill prepared for his work, unless he is able to scan, with intelligence and discrimination, a wide horizon of the history of nations.

The sentiments of beauty in the artist, and of justice in the statesman, must either be formed on older models, or else be rude and primitive; but it does not at all follow that any one model, nor that all of them put together, should be regarded as a standard of perfection. Their light and assistance, as guides and instructors, may be invaluable, or even indispensable, while they are never thought of at all as infallible authorities, even though, perhaps, their excellence may defy imitation.

Such lessons from the past are the groundwork and the spring of all our present attainments, of all that distinguishes an educated man from an untutored savage; but every one must be conscious that all the knowledge which he can truly call his own, rests not upon the authority of any teacher or teachers, but upon his own discernment of its truth, being always arrived at by a comparison of different teachers, and of his own observations and experience, whose lessons must be sifted and weighed against each other before the bar of his own private judgment.

It cannot be otherwise in the matter of religion. Spiritual truth, much more than any other kind of knowledge, must be discerned before it can be believed. Our knowledge of spiritual truth is, in a great measure, founded on the Bible, because it has been the teacher of our teachers for eighteen hundred years, and its doctrines are those which have been transmitted to us, variously modified by ancient and modern interpretations. To the Bible, in the first instance, and chiefly, we owe the vantage ground on which we stand. The Bible, and its history, are the history of our religion, from which we can best learn the various stages through which it has passed, in its progress from the rudest idolatry among the ancient Jews down to these days of enlightenment.

If our conceptions of God and of truth are nobler or clearer than those of the heathen, we are indebted for *that* to the Bible, because it is the vehicle by which the light of other days has been transmitted to us. Our lamps have had almost no other kindling. When viewed as the vehicle and history of religion, the Bible is invaluable, and never can cease to be studied with interest and with advantage; but to set up the history as an infallible standard, and as an authority commanding absolute submission, is a monstrous absurdity, which Protestants are now rather generally beginning to perceive, and which cannot much longer be continued.

Protestantism must at length be consistent, and the necessity of this becomes daily more felt. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Of two antagonistic principles, one must be false. Freedom of opinion and submission to authority cannot be reconciled. One or the other must prevail.

Protestantism! What does it mean? A protest against the shackles of authority in matters of religion. It must become, and is rapidly becoming, a protest against *all* such authority, a vindication of man's

inalienable right, and of his most sacred duty, to discern spiritual truth for himself, and to believe only that which he has so discerned.

A new reformation is needed, and has already begun; another reformation from Popery—the Popery of the Bible. The Bible has been made to us what Samuel was to Saul, has been set up to supply the place of the old temple-veil, separating between man and God, mystifying and obscuring the Divine light, instead of preparing us for its *direct* reception; and if it has in many cases also done the latter, there can, on the other hand, be no manner of doubt that the preposterous claims made on its behalf have repelled, and are repelling, many thousands from the search after truth, and driven them to indifference or infidelity. This we believe to be the principal, if not the only cause of the wide-spread aversion and hostility to religion, which is the most melancholy characteristic of the age in which we live. Hence the universal complaint that the churches are paralysed by the rarity of faith, or of spiritual life, even among their members and adherents. Hence the reason why the so-called revivals of religion, whether among ritualists, methodists, or others, have become so far an offence and a reproach in the opinion of most men of judgment and understanding; and why they are almost entirely confined to the weak, the simple, and the superstitious, whose emotional sentiments are not directed nor controlled by their intellectual discernments.

I look forward to a genuine spiritual awakening, greater than any which the world has yet seen, of which all past reformations and revivals have been but the harbingers and pioneers. The barriers are already crumbling, and must ere long be swept away. The veil has long been rent, and must soon be entirely and for ever torn down. The usurping claims of authority shall not for ever, nor for long, continue to

darken the souls of men. Protestantism shall assuredly accomplish the triumph of its work, which meantime remains incomplete, and must so remain, until it is universally proclaimed that all religious books and teachers are of use to men only in so far as they serve to develope and to cultivate the sentiment of truth, and to awaken the desire for the knowledge of God, and for communion with Him,—a sentiment and a desire which the Spirit of God alone can satisfy, by that quickening and enlightening influence and sympathy, for which the earnest inquiring soul never yet has thirsted nor prayed in vain. No real benefit can accrue to us from the inspiration of ancient priests, prophets, and apostles, until we have each of us some measure of inspiration for ourselves ; and, having that, all questions regarding the various measures in which the gift has been bestowed on others must be of small importance. For my part, I am firmly persuaded that inspiration has never been withheld, and that, like all other divine gifts, its nature is unchangeable, while its degrees are infinitely various, depending, under God's providence, upon many circumstances, foremost among which are the presence or absence of intervening obstacles, and the true or false preparation on our part for its reception.

1 COR. ii. 14, 15.—“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

Verily God is not far from any one of us, and He does guide with His counsel now, as truly and as surely as in the days of Samuel and David, every soul of man that seeks in earnestness and simplicity to know what it is to know God. This is the one great source and spring of all true religion or spiritual life—the sympathy of the pure and perfect God with the soul of every faithful worshipper. The record of this

may be read in the Bible, or in the experience of any man whose spiritual life has been awakened. This doctrine is the grand good thing which beyond all else it behoves us to hold fast. This, we believe, is to be the living principle of the new reformation, which shall extend and apply to every creed and to every nation under heaven.

The Bible is indeed our teacher, when cross-examined, sifted, and compared, as all our teachers ought and need to be ; but it has been foolishly set up as our idol, has been made to usurp the place of God, and to bar the way of approach to Him. As Samuel tried to impress upon the Jews and upon Saul that the rejection of the priest was the rejection of God, so have we been assiduously taught and trained to believe that if we refuse to receive the whole Bible as a revelation of the mind and will of God, we cannot escape the guilt of rejecting God, and of rebelling against His revealed Word. It is not wonderful that many of us have, like Saul, been troubled with an evil spirit, seeing that our Samuels have assured us that in refusing absolute submission to their idol we are departing from the only living and true God.

All idols must be utterly abolished ; and when we have purged ourselves from idolatry, we shall understand much better how to deal with the idolatry of the heathen. When we have taken the beam out of our own eye, then shall we see clearly to pull the mote out of our brother's eye.