THE PRIESTHOOD OF DAVID'S SONS.

THOSE who think that no fresh Biblical discoveries can be made except through the material spade, are in grievous error. It is the duty of the investigator to use all the facts which he can collect, whether obtained through excavation of the soil or through diggings, not less deep, in the traditional texts. Who has not heard of the interminable discussion as to the meaning of the following passages? I quote from the Revised Version:

"And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and Pelethites; and David's sons were *priests*" (2 Sam. viii. 18).

"And Ira also the Jairite was *priest* unto David" (2 Sam. xx. 26).

"And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers; and Zabud the son of Nathan was *priest*, (and) the king's friend" (1 Kings iv. 5).

Dr. Driver writes thus in a work much appreciated by students, and in a recent work quoted from continually by Dr. Löhr, of Halle:

> What relation did these כהנים bear to the כהנים of *v.* 17? Were both sacrificing priests? From xx. 26 it may be inferred that they stood in some special relation to the king. Were they 'domestic priests' (Ewald), or did they represent the king at public religious ceremonies? . . . The term כהן could hardly have been applied to a minister who was not a priest, unless, by long usage of priests who acted specially as ministers, it had come to denote the *non*-priestly duties discharged by them, and could thus be applied to persons other than priests, to whom the same duties were entrusted (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of Samuel*, p. 220).

Dr. H. P. Smith, in his commentary on Samuel, p. 310, has this brief note:

> The traditional exegesis has difficulty in supposing David's sons to be *priests* in the proper sense, for by the Levitical code none could be priests except descendants of Aaron. For this reason the Chronicler

changes his text, substituting הראשנים ליד המלך. Cf. also αὐλάρχαι G. But there is no reason for departing from the plain meaning of the text.

Dr. Löhr agrees with these commentators:

> This fact (that David's sons were priests) may be difficult to reconcile with the later legal development, but is not to be rendered meaningless by explanations such as domestic chaplains, non-Levitical priests, ministers of state for the religious department, or by viewing the word as a mere title (*Die Bücher Samuels*, 150).

The latter words are an allusion to Baudissin, who holds (*Geschichte des Alttestamentlichen Priesterthums*, 1889, p. 191) that "*kohen* is the designation of a high officer in the court, and is explained in 1 Kings iv. 5 by the appended phrase, 'friend of the king.' . . . Probably the title of priest was attached *honoris causâ* to kings' sons and high officers." To this view Buhl (Gesenius, *Handwörterbuch*, ed. 13, p. 360) gives his assent.

The above is merely a preface to the communication which I have to make. Taking up the three passages quoted above, and also the parallel passage 1 Chronicles xviii. 17, and treating them as one would treat any Hebrew passage elsewhere which had some suspicious phenomena, I seemed to myself to see what the right reading in the respective passages must be. In 2 Samuel viii. 18, for כֹּהֲנִים read סֹכְנִים; in 2 Samuel xx. 26 and 1 Kings iv. 5, for כֹּהֵן read סֹכֵן; in 1 Chronicles xviii. 17, for הָרִאשֹׁנִים לְיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ read הָיוּ סֹכְנִים לְדָוִיד. It is easy to prove the correction suggested for 1 Kings iv. 5, and this carries with it the corrections of the first two passages. In 1 Kings iv. 5, כהן is followed by רֵעֶה, "friend" (a well-known official title in Oriental courts). This is plainly a gloss which in G has actually expelled the word which it sought to explain; while in MT the difficult word סֹכֵן has been altered into כֹּהֵן. A further confirmation of this is derivable from 1 Kings iv. 6, the beginning of which runs thus in MT:

ואחישר על־הבית, but ought rather to be read (as Klostermann has shown) אֲחִיו שַׂר עַל־הַבַּיִת. The whole passage will then run, "And Zabud, son of Nathan, a royal administrator, his [Azariah's] brother, was the officer over the palace." With this compare Isaiah xxii. 15, where סֹכֵן is explained by the phrase אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַבַּיִת (perhaps אשר should be שַׂר).

The correction of 1 Chronicles xviii. 17 cannot be so certainly proved. Some emendation, however, is necessary, and this I believe to be the best. הראשנים ליד המלך was not a natural expression for a writer like the Chronicler to adopt in order to remove a phrase which he found troublesome in his authority. I may remark, by the way, that textual criticism does not confirm the view that the Chronicler was quite so ready to interfere with his authorities as has been supposed. In the case before us, I do not believe that the interference theory is justified. If the Chronicler had set himself to efface a reference to non-Levitical priests, he could easily have found a more distinct expression than "the first beside the king." The correction which I have adopted seems very probable. What the *sōkēn* was, or, at least, might be, we know from the passage of Isaiah already quoted (xxii. 15). The word *sōkēn* was also in use in Phœnician.

Since forming the above view, I have found this remark in Hitzig's *Psalmen*, ii. 318 [1865]:

> Exceptionally David officiated as priest (2 Sam. vi.) at a time when the cultus was suspended, and there were no longer any priests. He was obliged to appoint some himself, and nominated Levites as such (2 Sam. viii. 17; xx. 25); his sons he made, not priests, but (so we should write in viii. 18) סֹכְנִים.

The case is analogous to that of Zechariah ix. 13, where some earlier critics, who were adverse to throwing 2 Zechariah into the Greek period, sought to emend the trouble-

some יון. For my part, I am with the "advanced" critics on the critical questions affected, both by the Samuel passages and by the Zechariah passage; but I believe that the conservative critics were on the right track, both when they sought to weaken the sense of כהנים and when they tried to correct יון. Hitzig may have been stimulated to correct כהנים in 2 Samuel viii. 18 by a non-critical prejudice, but his correction was right. He omits, however, to justify it. This I have myself tried to do, and in my corrections I know that I was entirely independent of Hitzig. The reading סכנים cannot any longer be dismissed, as Baudissin (I now observe) has dismissed it in his *History of the Old Testament Priesthood*. The scales are falling from the eyes of many students of the Hebrew text. For those who have worked critically through the text of a single book on the principles of the newer textual criticism (cf. my article in the EXPOSITOR, April, 1899), it will not be natural to hesitate long to accept at any rate the first two of these emendations.

Before concluding, I would remark that Prof. van Hoonacker has a very full discussion of the priesthood of David's sons in his new work, *Le Sacerdoce Lévitique* (1899), pp. 266–281. He at any rate has no prejudice against corrections of the text. He asks (p. 280): "Might not the כהן of the Massoretic text [in 1 Kings iv. 5] be the result of a confusion with the name נתן which immediately precedes, and which, moreover, appears twice in the same verse?" This would be a very plausible suggestion, but for 2 Samuel viii. 18 and xx. 26, where כהן (כהנים) also occurs. Prof. van Hoonacker, however, is of opinion that the notice of the sons of David in these passages originally assigned to them the title which we now find in 1 Chronicles xviii. 17. I am sure that, whether he convinces his readers or not, he will succeed in satisfying them of the thoroughness of his investigation and of his freedom from controversial bitterness. I am very sure, too, though not through his

own researches, that historical critics have fallen into error on the office of "David's sons." It is not, indeed, an extremely important error, but it is a conspicuous one, and it has arisen from their undue conservatism in matters of textual criticism. Caution is not everything in textual criticism. Indeed, neither caution nor boldness is specially the characteristic of the textual critic, but resourcefulness.

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APOCALYPTIC SKETCHES.

VI.

THE SUN-CLAD WOMAN AND HER ENEMIES.

REV. XII.–XIV.

THE seventh seal opens out into seven trumpets; and now we shall find the seventh trumpet opening out into a series of developments which issue in the catastrophe of the seven vials or bowls of judgment. I am aware that some regard the seventh trumpet as closed in the eleventh chapter; but this seems quite inconsistent with the solemn warning of the fourteenth verse: "The second woe is past: behold the third woe cometh quickly." The first and the second woes have been so appalling that we naturally expect the third to be more appalling still, whereas if it is finished in the eleventh chapter it could scarcely be reckoned a woe at all; rather is it a jubilation. The true view, therefore, seems to be, as in former cases, that when a great catastrophe is about to be announced, the mind is prepared for it by a preliminary assurance that what is dark and dreadful is only temporary, only a preparation for the time when the harshest discords shall be resolved into universal harmony. The third woe then is the woe of the seven vials or bowls reached in the 15th chapter, in which we are