

ARTICLE V.

A CANONICAL FORMULA INTRODUCING
CERTAIN HISTORICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD
TESTAMENT.

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MANY supposed biblical errors have been shown, within the last quarter of a century, to be unreal by discoveries in Oriental archæology and geography, by the study of contemporary histories, and by progress of scholarship in comparative philology and the Semitic languages. So many have thus been removed that we may reasonably expect others to disappear as rapidly as ever the light breaks in and as soon as ever we are willing to accept its revelations.

It will be clear, I hope to all, that my object in this paper is modestly and reverently to try to clear up two such apparent "errors" in the Scriptures which no one, as yet, has been able to explain away; and I unhesitatingly presume to hold the theory that they were not in the original text—also this, so far from being sheer assumption upon which no mind can rest with certainty, seems to me to be not "theory" at all, but a patent unquestionable matter of fact in no way unlike others we are encountering all the time in biographical and historical compositions, where the author's introduction of documentary matter is manifestly distinct, and is recognized as such by the reader instantly and without dispute.

The first of these alleged "errors" occurs in the opening words of Judges (i. 1);—

“Now after the death of Joshua it came to pass, that the children of Israel asked of the Lord, saying, Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them?”

followed, as it is, by an account of the war upon and the slaughter of the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Anakim of Hebron, the inhabitants of Debir, the people of Zephath, Jerusalem as divided from Jebus, Bethel, and so on—the whole of Southern Palestine with the exception of a single *'emeq*. Here the “error” lies in two particulars.

One element of discrepancy is geographical. Already, during the campaign against the Five Kings, we have been told, in Joshua x., how Joshua had smitten the kings of Jerusalem and of Hebron, had attacked Hebron and Debir, taken them, slain them at the edge of the sword,—that is to say, all the souls that were therein, and all the cities thereof; and besides these:—

“All the country of the Mountain, and of the Negeb, and of the Shephehah, and of the Springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed. And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon. And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel” (verses 40-42).

Also Josh. xi. 21, 22:—

“And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakim from the Mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities. There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the children of Israel.”

—terms which affirm, as positively as language can express, that over the region of the south from Kadesh-barnea to Gibeon the conquest was finished once for all and the destruction of human life was total, utter to the last breath, leaving no relics of the original inhabitants surviving to be exterminated at a later day. The remnants of Canaanites not driven out, we are expressly told were in the north—on the ground of Ephraim and Manasseh, and in the east—Geshur and Maachah.

The other element of discrepancy is chronological. All this happened in Joshua's lifetime, early in the Seven Years' Conquest; it was done by Joshua himself, who began it and ended it; nothing of the sort remained to be performed or completed after his death. Joshua's decease is recounted in the sequel to all this, as a subsequent event.

This "error" has always been a cause of meditation and trouble to interpreters; and many proposals have been offered to account for it, or to correct it.

Lord Arthur Hervey, D.D., Bishop of Bath and Wells, in the "Speaker's Commentary," could devise no better solution of the problem than to arrange the first chapter of Judges after the thirteenth chapter of Joshua, and to substitute Moses for Joshua in the first clause of Judg. i. 1:—

"The preface is, in some respects, very obscure, and the opening words cannot be explained upon any ordinary principles of composition. For while the first verse speaks of the things about to be narrated as happening *after the death of Joshua*, the series of events actually narrated in the first chapter, and the opening verses of the second, happened in Joshua's lifetime. . . . No satisfactory account of this has ever been given, nor is it easy to suggest one consistent with the integrity of the present text" (p. 116).

"If the first chapter was the sequel of a narrative which, like Joshua xiii., had mentioned the distribution of the land east of Jordan among the two half tribes by Moses, then this first chapter might have begun, *Now after the death of Moses*, etc., and *Moses* might easily have been changed into *Joshua* when this chapter was made the beginning of the book of Judges. If *Moses* is read instead of *Joshua*, all difficulty disappears at once. . . . The present corruption of the text is certain; the correction, of course, is uncertain" (pp. 124, 125).

But this solution is conditioned upon an "if," and it changes the subject of the sentence and a discourse: the first chapter of Judges, however, does not follow the thirteenth chapter of Joshua, and a correction of the name Joshua into Moses would be a cutting of the knot apart from all tangible warrant. The best thing about Lord Hervey's comment is his frank confession of disagreement in the texts and his suggestion unblemished by sophistry.

As much cannot be said in favor of the ordinary way of

treating the issue. This is fairly represented by the procedure of the Reverend William J. Deane, in his recent volume entitled "Joshua: his Life and Times." At first, he says:—

"With the mention of the conquest of Debir the details of the operations in the south are brought to a close, and we are told generally that Joshua smote all the land, the hills, the Negeb, the lowland, and the slopes—a comprehensive description which summarizes the results of the campaign, and implies that the whole district from the centre to the desert-frontier in the extreme south was subdued."

But almost immediately he takes this back:—

"The campaign had been most rapid and successful, 'because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel'; but it was scarcely as complete as at first sight it appears to be. Later events prove that, although the places actually captured were then destroyed with their inhabitants, a large portion of the population escaped the general slaughter, and having withdrawn in safety for a time, on the removal of the attacking force they returned and occupied their old quarters in the vicinity. It must needs have been so. The Israelites were not directed to exterminate the Canaanites at once; such an undertaking was physically impossible under the circumstances, and would have been inexpedient if feasible. The displacement was to be gradual. The invaders were not prepared to colonize every district which they seized; and to massacre all the human beings, leaving the land untenanted by man, was to consign it to deterioration and desolation. No country was more dependent on manual labor for its well-being. The destruction of wild beasts alone needed constant vigilance and courage. Besides this, where water was but scantily supplied by natural resources, the skill of man was imperatively needed for its storage and distribution, and any failure in these respects involved dearth and famine. Either from inability or from policy a large number of places, as we shall see, was left unconquered. In fact the chosen people never did carry out the programme specified. As in all human undertakings, imperfection intervened, and in part frustrated and delayed the designs of Providence" (pp. 95-97).

To all this only one remark deserves to be made—it flatly contradicts in almost every detail the narratives of Joshua, in the interest of the first chapters of Judges supposing the latter to treat of later and different events. It cannot be right, for the record of Joshua has every claim to be accepted as literally correct and as in no degree less trustworthy in this respect than the record of Judges; and the true solution will bear out and establish both accounts.

A similar expedient is resorted to by Keil, who undertakes to construe the first chapter of Judges as relating how the charge of Joshua, administered to all the people on his dying day, was carried out:—

“With the words, ‘And it came to pass after the death of Joshua,’ etc., the book of Judges takes up the thread of the history where the book of Joshua had dropped it, in order to describe the further development of the covenant-people. Only a little while before his death Joshua had set before the Elders and Heads of the nation, assembled around him, the complete extirpation of the Canaanites through the all-powerful assistance of the Lord, provided merely that they would remain true to the Lord, while at the same time he held up before them the dangers of falling away from the Lord (Josh. xxiii.). Bearing in memory this reminder and warning, the children of Israel asked, after Joshua’s death, ‘Who shall begin the war against the still-to-be-outrooted Canaanites?’ And the Lord answered, ‘Judah shall go up against them.’”¹

This is none the less inadmissible; for the story of Judges (chap. i.) relates, evidently, to particulars which had taken place prior to the death of Joshua. The twenty-third chapter of Joshua, under whose shadow Keil takes refuge, relates to remnants:—

“Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, *even* these that remain among you, and make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out these nations from before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap unto you” (verses 12, 13).

Now, 1. A remnant is not a tribe at large; and Judges i. certainly does not describe an after-attack or a war against remnants. 2. Among the remnants providentially left to prove Israel, official lists of which are given in Joshua, none are mentioned dwelling in the Har, the Shephelah, or the Negeb; thus showing that extermination was complete throughout the territory of Judah and Simeon from the first: the remnants that had not known all the wars of Canaan were the Philistines, the Canaanites of the western coastline, the Sidonians, the Hivites that dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon unto the entering in of Hamath.

¹ Biblischer Commentar, s. 187.

3. Even if other remnants survived, because *remnants* left to prove Israel they could not be exterminated, because this would have defeated the divine purpose in having them left.

4. In point of fact, such remnants were never exterminated by Israel; they did remain; they were allowed to remain; and, accordingly, Judges (chap. i.) cannot refer to them.

5. A fair inquiry is unanswerable: Where were Judah and Simeon abiding all the time after the Seven Years' Conquest until the death of Joshua outside their allotted territory, and what were they doing all those twenty-five or thirty years? Are we not explicitly told in Josh. xxi. 43-45, that immediately after the division of the land by lot:—

"The Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" ?

It would be unkind, in such a review of representative artifices to excuse this "error," not to notice the neological way of escape. Julius Wellhausen, in his "Prolegomena to the History of Israel," thus discourses upon the book of Judges:—

"The following prologue supplies us with the point of view from which the period of the judges is estimated. 'After the death of Joshua, the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, the Baals and Astartes. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers,' etc.'" (p. 228).

Upon its face the principle of selection from the first two chapters of Judges here followed would be obscure, even after close scrutiny; but, fortunately, some of Wellhausen's followers are less reserved. Thus, Professor D. Karl Budde enlightens us:—

"The same section Josh. xxiv. 28-33 [the end of the book relating the death of Joshua], originally a portion of E, is presupposed already by Judg.

i. 1. a 'And it came to pass after the death of Joshua'; and, inasmuch as chapter i. in its original form certainly does not fall in the period after Joshua's death, this phrase is to be attributed to E, and the beginning of his conception must have run as follows: chap. i. 1, a a, 'And after the death of Joshua—chap. ii. 13 it came to pass that the children of Israel forsook Yahweh and served Baal and Astarte (read these as singular). Ver. 20. Thereupon the anger of Yahweh burned against Israel, and he spake,' etc. . . . Thus, between chap. i. 1 a a ["And it came to pass after the death of Joshua"] and chap. ii. 13 ["And they forsook Yahweh, and served Baal and Astarte"] Rje inserted the remainder as far as chap. ii. 5 out of J, at the same time accommodating it through the pragmatic section chap. ii. 1 b-5 to the view of E."¹

* In other words, from the midst of a uniformly running Jehovistic narrative these neologists select certain phrases, verses, sections, and then affirm them to have been primarily of different authorship from the remainder—passages at present characterized by reading Yahweh, at first read Elohim. Where, upon the face of the text, only one writer had a hand in its composition, they perceive the hands of two or three, and boldly venture to define, separate, and rejoin the elementary readings. In so doing they appear to proceed on the principle that all parts of the narrative relating to events which occurred before the death of Joshua were composed by J, and all parts relating to events which happened after the death of Joshua were composed by E, the combination having been effected by Rje at a still later date. Surely, it is needless to say, that this has no better foundation than hypothesis: no evidence is offered, no proof is possible. Joshua lived at least as early as the thirteenth century B. C.: generally J is supposed by these critics to have been composed about the year 800 B. C., and E about 750 B. C., J and E, then, being only fifty years apart. Why should J, five centuries after the death of Joshua, treat only of events which happened during the life of Joshua, and E only of those which happened after his death? No explanation is given; no reason is obvious. And in the absence of

¹ Die Bücher Richter und Samuel, ss. 161, 162.

demonstration, the assumption is without weight, and carries no conviction to a mind not infatuated with such speculations.

The Reverend A. W. Oxford's condensation of Stade, Bleek, and Wellhausen is no less disappointing here:—

"The introduction to the book of Judges has been connected with the book of Joshua by the words 'after the death of Joshua.' It is not, however, a continuation of that book, but a parallel to it since the west-Jordan land is not yet conquered and some events are common to both histories. The contents of the introduction are most important, though they are in part unhistorical, sometimes even contradictory."¹

This denies the truth of the book, impeaches its credibility, and, in place of some sort of an effort to diminish the darkness, exhibits a painful willingness to intensify it.

The second of these alleged "errors" occurs in the opening words of Ruth (i. 1):—

"Now it came to pass in the days when the judges judged, that there was a famine in the land."

Here the discrepancy lies between the era indicated, that of the judges technically so-called, and that of the personages concerned in the book itself—Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David.

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife; and he went in unto her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son" (chap. iv. 13).

"And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbors gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (verses 16, 17).

According to this, Boaz was contemporary with Eli—at least, when, in advanced life, he married Ruth. Not only is this indicated by comparisons of genealogies, but it is the voice of Jewish tradition. Josephus thought so; and if he thought so, he had been taught so:—

"Now after the death of Samson, Eli the high-priest was governor of the Israelites. Under him, when the country was afflicted with a famine, Elimlech of Bethlehem, which is a city of the tribe of Judah, being not able to support his family under so sore a distress, took with him Naomi his wife, and the children that were born to him by her, Chilion and Mahlon, and removed his habitation into the land of Moab."²

¹ A Short Introduction to the History of Ancient Israel, p. 4.

² Antiquities of the Jews, Book v. chap. ix. sect. 1.

Furthermore, the whole action and air of the drama forbids an attribution to the era and events of the period of the judges. An idyl is so very unlike a war-song that the two cannot be synchronous. Apart from a consideration of the words at present prefacing the book, no reader of the story of Ruth would dream of concurrence with the epoch of Othniel, Jabin, Gideon, Jephthah, or Samson; and this contrariety of spirit, style, social life, and public affairs has always been recognized. For the usual expression of such cognizance, take the deliverance of Dr. Cassell:—

“The book of Judges exhibits the military history of Israel: the book of Ruth, however, introduces us to the peaceful private life of the people. We hear no trumpet-blasts or peans of triumph, only the rustling of the sickles among the grain-stalks salutes our ears. We find ourselves transported into the rural family-life of Israel. Not the warrior or king, but the farmer and householder find their prototypes here. The little book relates a narrative of social village life, and within its brief compass exhibits the profoundest sorrow, the noblest love, and all the attractiveness of an Israelitish life of faith. Naomi and Boaz are not painted in the same colors as Deborah and Gideon. . . . The whole picture is surmounted by a calm, clear sky. The reader finds himself now in the open field, now on the road, and anon among the assembly of citizens at the gate.”¹

Or the antithesis of Dr. Wordsworth:—

“The book of Ruth forms a beautiful contrast to that which precedes it—the book of Judges.

“In the book of Judges, we have had a succession of dark scenes of defection from God, of rebellion against him, of idolatry and all its unhappy results, famines, oppressions of Israel, national discord, confusion, bloodshed, especially toward the close of that book, in the mournful history of Samson, in the idolatry of Micah and of the tribe of Dan, and in the outrage at Gibeah, in the slaughter of the forty thousand of Israel by their brethren of Benjamin, and in the almost total extinction of the tribe of Benjamin by the sword of

Ruth! We are transported from the gloomy scenery of cloudy days, to the sunny fields around Bethlehem Ephrata. We see them shining in the golden light of harvest. 'The valleys stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing.'

"The book of Ruth is like some beautiful landscape of Claude, with its soft mellow hues of quiet eventide, and the peaceful expanse of its calm lake, placed side by side with some stern picture of Salvator Rosa, exhibiting the shock of armies and the storm of war; and receiving more beauty from the *chiaro-oscuro* of the contrast. Or, if we may adopt another comparison, derived from classical Literature, the book of Ruth, coming next after the book of Judges, is like a transition from the dark, terrific scenes of a tragedy of Æschylus to the fresh and beautiful landscapes of some pastoral idyl of Theocritus, transporting us to the rural Thalysia, or harvest-home, under the shade of elms and poplars, on the banks of the Halis, or to the flowery meadows and sheep-walks on those of the Arethusa or Anapus.

"In the book of Ruth we are charmed with scenes equally beautiful, hallowed by piety and love."¹

Naturally, we are bound to infer that the two books relate to times and circumstances altogether different.

Yet, under the influence and compulsion of those chronological words at the outset of the book now in question, commentators have felt constrained ruthlessly to coerce the two series of events under the same term. For example, Lord Arthur Hervey, D. D., again:—

"But the book has another interest, from the charming view it gives us of the domestic life of pious Israelites even during the most troubled times. Had we only drawn our impressions from the records of violence and crime contained in the book of Judges, we should have been ready to conclude that all the gentler virtues had fled from the land, while the children of Israel were alternately struggling for their lives and liberties with the tribes of Canaan, or yielding themselves to the seductions of Canaanite idolatry. But the book of Ruth, lifting up the curtain which veiled the privacy of domestic life, discloses to us most beautiful views of piety, integrity, self-sacrificing affection, chastity, gentleness and charity, growing up amidst the rude scenes of war, discord and strife."²

Still, after all, is this violent and unnatural throwing back of the gentle fortune of Ruth into the rude and almost savage times of the judges, especially toward the latter part of their rule, really necessary? For one, I think not.

¹ Introduction to Ruth, Vol. ii. pp. 158, 159.

² Speaker's Commentary, p. 224.

And this brings me, at length, to the suggestions I have to propose for the removal of both these "errors."

In both places, the beginning of the book of Judges and the beginning of the book of Ruth, the whole trouble is caused, not by the original reading of the documents, but by certain initiatory words prefixed to them by the man who first formed the canon. According to my best, and at the same time humble, judgment, the canon-maker, when he came to bring together the different books of the Old Testament into one consecutive series, roll, or volume, thought proper to prefix to some of them an introductory clause, or phrase not unlike a formula, to indicate sequence and to establish the place of the book in the canon as following next after the preceding one, both in subject-matter and in order. Compare the beginnings of these books:—

1. Joshua i. 1, 2.

ויהי אחרי מות משה עבד יהוה

And it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah,

ויאמר יהוה אל-יהושע בן-נח משרת משה לאמר : משה עבדי מת ועתה קום עבר
And Jehovah spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, minister of Moses, saying,

אתה הירק הזה

Moses my servant is dead ; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, etc.

2. Judges i. 1.

ויהי אחרי מות יהושע

And it came to pass after the death of Joshua,

וישאלו בני ישראל ביהוה לאמר מי-יעלה-לנו אל-הכנעני בתחלה להלחם בו : ויאמר
And the sons of Israel asked Jehovah, saying, Who shall go up for us first
יהוה יתודה יעלה

against the Canaanites, to fight against them? And Jehovah said, Judah shall go up: etc.

3. Ruth i. 1.

ויהי בימי שפט השפטים

4. 1 Samuel i. 1.

? ? ? ?

ויהי איש אחד מן-הרמתיים צופים מחר אפרים ושמו אלקנה

And there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name—Elkanah.

5. 2 Samuel i. 1.

ויהי אחרי מות שאול

And it came to pass after the death of Saul,

ודוד שב מהכות את-העמלק

And David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, etc.

6. 1 Kings i. 1.

? ? ? ?

והמלך דוד זקן בא בימים ויכסהו בכנדים ולא יחם לו

And king David was old, stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, yet he gat no heat.

7. 2 Kings i. 1, 2.

ויפשע מואב בישראל אחרי מות אחאב:

And Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

ויפל אחזיה בעד הישבכה בעליתו אשר בשמרון ויחל

And Ahaziah fell down through the lattice in his upper chamber which was in Samaria, and he was sick, etc.

2 Kings iii. 5.

ויהי כמות אחאב ויפשע מלך-מואב כמלך ישראל

And it came to pass that Ahab died; and the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

By thus setting the passages in juxtaposition, this canonical, introductory, time-and-order establishing phrase is found to be present in five out of seven beginnings:—

Josh. i.1: "And it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah."

Judg. i.1: "And it came to pass after the death of Joshua."

Ruth i.1: "And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged."

2 Sam. i.1: "And it came to pass after the death of Saul."

2 Kings i.1: "And Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab."

And it is seen to affect a post-mortem character.

In Josh. i. 1 this canonical formula—"And it came to pass after the death of Moses the servant of Jehovah"—is correct, because based on the immediate context.

Deut. xxxiv. 5: "So Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah."

Also,

Josh. i. 2: "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them."

Although true because thus based on the immediate context, it is tautological and superfluous. Manifestly, the original document did not begin in such manner. Divine guidance led its author into no unnecessary reiteration.

In Judg. i. 1 the scrap of canonical advice—"And it came to pass after the death of Joshua"—is incorrect, because it stands in conflict, instead of agreement, with the context of Judges i. and flatly contradicts the duplicate account of Joshua's death following in chap. ii. 6-9. It was written wholly out of regard to the preceding book, and wholly without regard to the book succeeding. The canon-maker's thought or care was of narrow range: his mind appears to have been occupied with the first recital of Joshua's death, near the close of the book of Joshua, and he did not wait to learn more before inditing his preamble to the book of Judges in conformity thereto. Having himself read, or copied perhaps, what went before, he remembered it; but he could not have looked ahead, in this instance, or he would have written something quite different. No such prefatory connection marked the manuscript he was to incorporate or transcribe: such a self-contradictory affirmation formed, and still forms, no part of the archaic record.

In Ruth i. 1 the canonical, introductory superscription,—
"And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged,"
—intended to convert the history of Naomi, Ruth, and

period when the country was directed by the high-priests, rather than the judges, as already indicated, not earlier than the halcyon days of Eli or his immediate predecessor.

In 1 Sam. i. 1 this canonical prefix is wanting: here the book-maker refrained from adding, "And it came to pass after the death of so-and-so," or "in the days when the prophets judged."

In 2 Sam. i. 1 the canonical link intended to connect the two books together after the separation—"And it came to pass after the death of Saul"—is correct, because founded on what next precedes and follows:

1 Sam. xxxi. 6: "So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armor-bearer, and all his men, that same day together."

And,—

2 Sam. i. 9, 10: "He said unto me, Stand, I pray thee, over me, and slay me, for giddiness hath taken hold of me; because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood over him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after that he was fallen."

But, because thus derived from the adjacent narrative, this invented link is redundant: it did not exist in the original document because the Spirit of God never prompts to "vain repetitions."

In 1 Kings i. 1, again, the introductory clause by the canon-maker is absent. David was old and advanced in years, but he was not yet dead.

However, in 2 Kings i. 1, the mortuary preface reappears—"And Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab"—and it is exact because in accord both with the foregoing chronicle,—

1 Kings xxii. 40: "So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead,"

and with the chronicle coming after,—

2 Kings iii. 5: "But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel."

Still, again, because purely iterative, it was uncalled for, and, being not a primary one, it was an afterthought born

of a purpose. Furthermore, at this point it is inserted in the midst of a narration pertaining to the son—not the father:—

1 Kings xxii. 51-53: "Ahaziah began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. And he served Baal, and worshipped him."

2 Kings i. 2: "And Ahaziah fell down through the lattice in his upper chamber that *was* in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, inquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this sickness."

Between these two statements of a continuous story, a reference to Ahab and the rebellion of Moab is obviously out of place, being totally foreign to the subject and purpose of the discourse. It is well-nigh needless to affirm that the original document was not interrupted in this manner. Finally, the phraseology of the insertion relating to Ahab is borrowed and brought backward, in this instance, from chap. iii. 5, by the canon-maker, who in so doing slightly modifies what he there found into his stereotyped diction, אַחֲרֵי מוֹת, "after the death of."

I trust such a comparison and scrutiny has shown this initial or serial set-phrase, common to five out of the seven books, clearly to be a device of the final book-maker, and not to have formed any part, or had any place, in the original separate Scriptures. Before the several books of our canon were made up into one roll or Bible, the primary manuscripts uniformly read:—

1. Josh. i. 1: "And Jehovah spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun, minister of Moses, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan."

2. Judg. i. 1: "And the sons of Israel asked Jehovah, saying, Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites, to fight against them? And Jehovah said, Judah shall go up."

3. Ruth i. 1: "And there was a famine in the land; and a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the field of Moab."

4. 1 Samuel i. 1: "And there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name, Elkanah."

5. 2 Samuel i. 1: "And David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites."

6. 1 Kings i. 1: "And king David was old, stricken in years."

7. 2 Kings i. 2: "And Ahaziah fell down through the lattice in his upper chamber that *was* in Samaria."

One cannot fail to remark the fact that if this canonical formula had been bestowed upon only two books more, it would be found now introducing every book of the Prior Prophets, together with Ruth. One may infer it was not inflicted upon the remaining two on account of the anachronism it would create with the proximate subject-matter of those books; and yet such an anachronism as,

"Now it came to pass after the death of Eli, that there was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, of Mount Ephraim, and his name--Elkanah;"

or,

"Now it came to pass after the death of David, that king David was old, stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat,"

would not essentially differ from the anachronism we possess already at the beginning of the book of Judges. Such a stroke of the canon-framer's pen is an unauthorized addition which we, in our turn, are to erase reverently, yet conscientiously, as soon as God shows its nature to us. Missing at the head of two of these seven books, it has not to be removed, and there is no loss. Present at the head of three of these seven books, it may be removed from them without loss, because its whole subject and content is left behind, close by. Present at the head of the other two out of these seven books, its removal would be an immense gain. Then, the first chapter of Judges, as just shown, would begin with the words,

"And the sons of Israel asked Jehovah, saying, Who shall go up for us first against the Canaanites?"

and the first chapter, together with the first nine verses of the second chapter, would thus be allowed to refer to events that happened before the death of Joshua. Then, the first chapter of Ruth would begin, as just shown, with the words,

"And there was a famine in the land,"

and the whole matter of the book would thus be allowed to stand not in conflict with the tenor of the history of the judges, but in harmony with the time of Eli. And then, the first chapter of Kings would begin, as just shown, without disunion in its narrative of Ahaziah. In order to make these reinstatements, we do not require the original autographs: we are able to perceive where the original autographs began just as clearly as if holding the earliest manuscripts in our hands and looking upon them with our eyes.

This is not higher criticism: strictly it is lower criticism, yet more properly literary criticism, because applied, not to the text of the original documents, but, to an adventitious phrase of literary character and purpose written upon the latest manuscripts by the latest of scribes—the one whose office it was to collect all the books of the Prior Prophets, at least, together into one volume with the Pentateuch, and perhaps with the remainder of the Old Testament Scriptures. When not leaning directly on the context, this canon-arranger leaned on his own understanding, and, accordingly, would lead us astray. He did not mean to be dishonest: he did not intend to be misleading. But, upon either good grounds or poor ones, he indulged an inference and then unwarrantably placed his inference in writing upon the manuscripts. He who took such liberty with his materials did not regard the records he was bringing together inviolable: he was wholly innocent of those notions respecting the preservation of the text prohibiting the slightest addition to, or subtraction from, the words and even letters of Scripture, entertained by his descendants; he was a collection-maker, not a document- or book-writer, and the documents or books he was handling may have been, probably were, already sev-

cation as to the relative date of his activity. It has been noticed, perhaps, in passing, that the two books of the Prior Prophets, free of his connective formula are those of First Samuel and First Kings. Now, the fact that it appears introducing Second Samuel and Second Kings is very significant, and goes to show its origin occurred in those days when the single histories of Samuel and Kings were divided each into two books, before, and very likely only shortly before, the Greek version appeared. This division may have existed in the Hebrew manuscript, the Seventy used.

It would be an easy matter to quote similar performances from our standard and current literature, did space allow. The truth is, we are so familiar with this manner, among writers, of introducing documentary matter, that we do not notice it as anything strange: it is perfectly understood unconsciously. Attention has not been paid to it, standing at the beginning of these books of the Prior Prophets and Ruth, hitherto, according to the best of my information and belief, simply because we are not accustomed to scan the Bible as we do other literary productions. This is unfortunate; for it is an obligation, under the light and learning of the present day, to restore the Scriptures to their original purity. Only extremists will adhere to such accessions—a few who hold every iota of the text, as it has come down to us, to be too sacred to be questioned and struck out if found recent—and a few who tenaciously cling to “errancies” in order to discredit and break away from revelation altogether. The true friends of the Bible will never cease striving to recover the original state of its text until it becomes entirely unencumbered by modifications imposed by fallible men.