

ART. V.—THE WITNESS OF THE HISTORICAL SCRIPTURES TO THE ACCURACY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

No. VIII.

THE next important figure which meets us is Jeroboam. And it is not too much to say that the criticism to which we take exception has wiped out of existence one of the most striking figures in Hebrew history. "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin," entirely disappears from it if certain modern critics be right. In the first place, if Israel was not yet wholly emancipated from Palestinian image-worship, it is a simple untruth to represent Jeroboam as an innovator. And if this view of Hebrew history be rejected—and the critics of the English school are not very explicit in stating whether they accept or reject it—it is still true that if there were no one sanctuary to which the religious allegiance of the people was exclusively due, then there could be no sin whatever in setting up centres of worship at Bethel and Dan. *Both* these transgressions are laid repeatedly and pointedly at Jeroboam's door by the history as we have it. It is for those who reject its statements to prove, and not merely to assert, that they are later insertions. At present the demonstration assumes one of these two somewhat singular forms: (1) Because we are persuaded that the religion of Israel was naturalistically evolved from fetichism or animism, through polytheism, all statements to the contrary found in the history are to be rejected. They are therefore later insertions. Or (2) because we are of opinion that certain phenomena in Judges and Samuel and 1 Kings imply that in those days there was no statute prescribing worship at one sanctuary, we must reject the statements of the historians that the establishment of other centres of Jehovah-worship was "making Israel to sin." They are therefore the result of a subsequent "working over" of the history by men influenced by a later religious development. Once more, we ask our opponents to point out a single instance in which this mode of treating historical documents has been accepted in the history of any other country.

There is a third sin attributed to Jeroboam, which also implies the existence of an order of men set apart to minister in holy things—the complaint that he made of the lowest of the people priests to offer sacrifices to the objects of his idolatrous worship. Professor Driver tells us that the "compiler of Kings, though not, probably (as has sometimes been supposed), Jeremiah himself, was, nevertheless, a man like-minded with Jeremiah, and almost certainly a contemporary

who lived and wrote under the same influences."¹ But Jeremiah was a man of influence in his day. He played a part as conspicuous as that played by Laud in the days of Charles I. Is it conceivable that under these circumstances he and his confederate should both of them be as grossly and absurdly ignorant of the course of Israelite history as modern criticism would make them—that they should put forth to explain that history theories as wonderful as that which regarded Tenterden steeple as the cause of the Goodwin Sands? The writers of books of which the verdict, not only of Christians, but of mankind in general, is that they are books of an unusually high order in the department of human thought must surely have had sufficient acquaintance with facts to prevent them from misreading their own history and misleading posterity to the extent they are supposed by modern theorists to have done. Their position in society, as well as their undeniable honesty and ability—the former proved, at least in Jeremiah's case, by his endurance of persecution—alike preclude such a supposition, and establish the conclusion that they had quite as much information what the course of the history really was, and quite as high qualifications for forming a judgment on it as those who, as much, if not more, under the influence of preconceived opinions, have undertaken to resolve their narratives into their constituent elements.²

Nor is this all. The whole history bears out the statement in 1 Kings xii. 28 of the reasons which induced Jeroboam to set up his idol-worship. As long as the consistent Israelites among his subjects felt themselves conscientiously bound to worship at the one sanctuary, so long would his throne be unsafe. He had therefore no alternative but to adopt some means of preventing them from doing so—means which effectually kept open the breach, and ultimately drove Israel to its fate. There is, as the late Professor Blunt has pointed out, a significant incident which shows plainly the danger to which Israel was exposed—and exposed simply in consequence of having set up an alternative worship to that at the one sanctuary at Jerusalem. Why did Baasha fortify Ramah to prevent people from going to and fro to Judah? And why did Asa pull down the fortress instead of occupying it? It is

¹ "Introduction," p. 189.

² Professor Driver ("Introduction," p. 188) gives us Kuenen's list of the passages which the latter regards as post-exilic. As that list rests on the assumption that prophecy is impossible, and as, even if the whole of the Old Testament were supposed to have been written between 20 and 10 B.C., there would still remain unmistakable prophecies in it, this assumption cannot be admitted, nor need deductions from it be examined.

obvious that the former wished to discourage and the latter to encourage the free ingress of Israelites into the southern kingdom. What was the reason? Clearly, *the worship at the one sanctuary*, which still, as in days of old, attracted pious Israelites to the centre of Israelite worship, the "city of the Great King," Jehovah, their God. So the author of Chronicles tells us; and we accept his statement here because, as on other occasions, it alone enables us to understand the account in Kings. It relates how "the priests and the Levites that were in all Israel resorted to Judah out of all their borders . . . 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."¹ It was to check this drain of the best, the most pious, and therefore the most industrious and useful of his population that Baasha built a fortification on the borders of Judah.² It was because Asa had every reason to encourage such an immigration that he needed no fortress, and therefore pulled it down. If subjective criticism is able to give us a better explanation of the facts, by all means let it do so. There are two things which it is more likely to do, neither of which has it any right to do. The one is to ignore an explanation which is neither unreasonable nor improbable; the other is to set up authoritatively an alternate one without anything which can legitimately be called a reason at all.³

There is another fact in the history of Israel after Jeroboam's time which tends to strengthen the view that the Hebrew Scriptures have not failed to give a correct account of the successive steps in their religious development. The history as it stands tells us that Jeroboam made Israel to sin by substituting visible symbols in worship for the invisible Jehovah, and by directing that the worship should take place at Bethel and Dan, instead of at Jerusalem. Chronicles further tells us, as we have just seen, that the consequence was such an exodus of pious Israelites from the northern kingdom as the readers of modern European history are well acquainted with in connection with the religious tyranny of Philip II. and Louis XIV. This is in itself precisely what might have been expected under the circumstances as narrated. But there is

¹ Chron. xi, 14-16.

² Baasha, we may observe, was a wiser man than Philip II. or Louis XIV.

³ Hosea is admitted even by the adherents of the subjective criticism to have written in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. But he in every chapter treats Ephraim as the author of Israelite apostasy, and in chap. viii., and in chaps. ix. 5, xiii. 1, 2, the sin of Jeroboam is as plainly indicated as in the history.

a remarkable confirmation of the truth of the story in the parts of the history the correctness of which, so far at least, has not been impugned. The moral and religious declension was far swifter in Israel than in Judah. Jeroboam himself, Omri, Ahab, and Ahab's descendants are downright idolaters as well as unprincipled men. The only brief gleam of moral vigour in Israel's whole history after the separation is the reign of Jeroboam II. In Judah a far higher type of monarch is the rule. In spite of the unfortunate alliance Jehoshaphat allowed his son to contract with the house of Ahab, we meet with no thoroughly bad king till the reign of Ahaz. Jehoram and Ahaziah appear to have been more weak than wicked—influenced by their wives, but kept, at least to a certain extent, in check by public opinion. And, though Israel at first vastly outnumbered Judah, yet the two monarchies seem to have been far more equally matched than the circumstances would have led us to expect. Moral strength, and the discipline consequent thereon, are, as we not unfrequently find in the history of the world, more or less a counterpoise to numbers. All this indicates, not, as has been contended, a nation gradually emancipating itself from polytheism and immorality, and shaping its course toward a higher religious and moral ideal, but to precisely what the history supposed to have been “worked over” presents to us—a nation whose moral and religious code dominated not the intellect merely, but the heart and the affections, and which derived a great deal of its empire over men's minds by the stimulus afforded by the existence at the capital of a central sanctuary.

The whole episode of Elijah and Elisha proceeds on the assumption that Israel has offended God's law. Otherwise it has no significance, and must be a later invention. These narratives (for they, too, are supposed to be composite, which is probable, but cannot of course be proved) are supposed to be of “North Israelitish origin.”¹

There can be little doubt that here the German critics are on unassailable ground. No Jewish writer, it may be regarded as certain, would have added an explanatory note to Beersheba, that it “belongeth unto Judah.”² But it is

¹ Driver, “Introduction,” p. 184. Linguistic grounds are—and very reasonably—alleged in behalf of this conclusion. But the marvel is that very slight indications are of weight when alleged in behalf of the modern theories—very weighty ones ignored or explained away when they make against them.

² 1 Kings xix. 3. Wellhausen here (“Hist. Isr.,” p. 292) acutely points out the mistake into which the writer has fallen as to the distance between Beersheba and Horeb. He was naturally ignorant on the point, as Horeb was so far off, just as a clergyman writing in Kent in the last century

worthy of remark that this (or these) North Israelite account (or accounts) regards Israel as apostate from the worship of the one true God—the God of *Israel*, as He is significantly called.¹ This corroboration of the statements found in the Pentateuch is most remarkable in a document “of North Israelitish origin,” and probably not of much later date than the age of Elijah himself. They have “forsaken the covenant,” Elijah complains.² It is objected that Elijah knows nothing of the worship of the one sanctuary, that he also complains that Jehovah’s altars have been thrown down, and that he repairs a disused altar of Jehovah. But for this argument to be admitted, it is necessary to show that under the Law no difference was made between positive and moral precepts.³ It has been already shown that such was not the case; that in the earlier and purer days of Israel’s history this distinction was fully comprehended; that it was only after the return from the Captivity that a hard and narrow legalism took the place of the earlier freedom of the pious

would quite naturally have imagined that it took a man forty days to travel from Newcastle to Edinburgh! But in view of this natural ignorance, the preternatural *acumen* displayed by P in his post-exilic survey of Palestine becomes more miraculous than ever. Purblind critics of the traditional order have been apt to explain the passage by referring to the very loose way in which figures are used in the Hebrew narratives, e.g., in 1 Sam. xvi. 10, and to suppose that all the historian meant was that Elijah fasted forty days and forty nights. They have also been inclined to think that the incorporation of a North Israelite account (or accounts) of events was indicative of the accuracy and care with which the history was compiled, and an additional witness in its favour.

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 34; 2 Kings i. 3, 6, 16, v. 15.

² 1 Kings xix. 10, 14. We may observe how frequently Elijah uses the phrase “Lord of hosts,” which is never found in the Pentateuch, but is characteristic of what has been until lately regarded as a period in Israelite history subsequent to the composition of the Pentateuch.

³ The stringency of the law of the One Sanctuary has been considerably exaggerated in order to strengthen the case in favour of the history having been “worked over” on behalf of this particular institution. Thus we may note (1) that in Deut. xii. 11 the precept is limited to “all that I command you”; in other words, special sacrifices *pro re natâ*, so to speak, might be offered elsewhere. And (2) the precept in Lev. xvii. 3, 4, which is remarkably stringent, refers solely to the *Tabernacle of the Congregation*, and therefore to *Israel in the wilderness*, where strict obedience to it was always possible. In Deuteronomy this stringency is markedly abated. In chap. xii. 21 provision is made for those—and they must have been a very considerable number indeed—for whom the Central Sanctuary was “too far.” Here we derive a strong confirmation of the traditional view that Deuteronomy was written subsequently to Leviticus. The emphasis which is laid throughout Deuteronomy on the duty of sacrificing when possible at the Central Sanctuary appears to have had a political rather than an ecclesiastical significance, and again corroborates the traditional view that Deuteronomy is addressed, not to the priests, but to the people.

Israelite, and the bold rebellion of the disobedient one. Elijah's object was to replace Baal worship by that of Jehovah. It was not the rehabilitation of an ancient and forgotten ritual, however abstractedly desirable such a rehabilitation might be, but the revival of the principle which alone could bring the ancient ritual again before the mind of apostate Israel. Like Wesley or Simeon, Elijah did not press the doctrine of the unity of the Church, nor the principles on which public worship rested. As with a trumpet-call he summoned a disobedient people back to its allegiance to God. The reason why this Israelitish narrative is included in the annals of the sister kingdom is obviously in order to emphasize the guilt of Israel in abandoning the worship of Jehovah at the place where He had set His Name, and the greatness of its punishment for such apostasy.

Professor Driver does not enter into any very elaborate analysis of the Second Book of Kings. But one fact escapes him, or at least he forgets to inform his readers of it, that such hints as the historian does let fall concerning the religious history of Judah are in strict keeping with the traditional view of that history, and do not suggest the theories by which it is attempted to supersede it. The temple is the centre of Jewish religious aspirations. Its repair is an object of importance to all the people, from the King down to the meanest of his subjects. The high priest and the priests are already in existence. There is no mention of the Levites, it is true. But this is, in all probability, because the historian is approaching the facts from their secular side. He is not, like the author of Chronicles, enforcing the observance of a neglected, and subsequently disused, ceremonial. He is only describing some interesting incidents of Jewish history. And therefore he takes no pains, as the author of Chronicles has done, to point out the precise distinction between priestly and Levitical functions, any more than a newspaper reporter of the present day, in describing a religious ceremony, would take care accurately to distinguish between the priests and the deacons present on a given occasion.

One more point must be noticed. The history still "knows nothing of the Book of the Covenant" regarded as existing apart from and earlier than the rest of the Jewish Law. It is not once referred to. There is no mention of the Sabbath, for instance, as a Divine institution. There are, certainly, in 2 Kings iv. 23, and xvi. 18, two incidental allusions to it. But it would be interesting to see how the subjective criticism would deal with the argument that the silence of the history points to the "Book of the Covenant" as the very latest code in the Pentateuch, and that the two

references to it of which mention has been already made are insertions which clearly prove that the Pentateuch was ultimately "worked over" according to the ideas of the author of this latest addition to Jewish ecclesiastical legislation! The answer will probably be that it (the theory) is not seriously alleged. Precisely so; but it is nevertheless an admirable *reductio ad absurdum* of the methods on which the subjective criticism proceeds. As to any *direct* evidence of the separate existence of the "Book of the Covenant," there is none whatever.

Our last point in the history is the character of Jeremiah. With his prophecies it is not our province to deal. But his character is as absolutely inexplicable under the hypothesis of German criticism as that, say, of William Tyndale would be on the hypothesis that the New Testament was largely the work of John Wiclif, and that Tyndale had written and recast a good deal of it himself in support of the views of the earlier Reformers. It seems as nearly impossible as can be that Jeremiah should have run such risks as he did run for views and institutions which he knew were of quite recent date, and to sustain which it was needful that the history of Israel, and not only so, but of God's dealings with Israel, should be transformed by the addition of matter which Jeremiah himself knew to be false. For Jeremiah, as we have already seen, or some contemporary of his like-minded with himself, is supposed to have brought the history of the Kings, with its frequent allusions to the one Sanctuary, into its present shape. The psychological problem, too, presented by Jeremiah, is the most perplexing possible on the German hypothesis. For he was at once profoundly patriotic and national, and yet a traitor to his country, her king, and her very existence. Patriotism would to him be impossible if his opinions were novel, for then he must have regarded the whole history of Israel as founded on, and witnessing to, a lie—and a lie of a most dangerous and destructive kind. If, on the other hand, he were indeed a patriotic Israelite to the backbone, then his abandonment of his country is inexplicable, supposing him to be aware, as from the critical point of view he must have been aware, that the king and the king's party were upholding the ancient institutions of his country, and that he was an advocate for a new departure altogether.¹

¹ It is curious that Wellhausen speaks ("Hist. Isr.," p. 480) of Josiah's as a *reformation*. If his view of it be sound, it was not a reformation, but a new departure. But it is noticeable how gingerly he deals with this alleged reformation. Students of Israelite history are much in need of a fuller discussion of this critical period, the aims of the actors, and the steps by which they secured success.

But granted that Jeremiah's view of the history was right—and perhaps he had almost as much authentic information on the point as a modern German critic has—the psychological problem is solved. Jeremiah is the supporter of the old laws and customs of his country. The king and his courtiers were the true traitors to that country. As they refuse to uphold the national honour, the national morality, and the national religion; as they insist on pursuing a course which can only end in disgrace and shame, Jeremiah warns his countrymen to abandon a lost cause, to submit to the judgment which an offended God has pronounced upon them, and to make the best of a necessary submission, since there was nothing left which was really worth defending. It is obvious, moreover, that if Jeremiah were really, as is asserted, the prophet of a new religion, he would have had a better hope of propagating it if the old national polity were overthrown. But in that case his strong national attitude, his clinging to the old flag till all hope was gone, as well as the whole contents of the prophecies he has left behind him, remain still to be explained. It may therefore safely be said of the German school that, great as is its patience, untiring as is its industry, astonishing as is its ingenuity, unlimited as is its confidence in itself, the more it comes to be examined, the more it will be seen that for every problem in Israelite history it professes to solve it leaves at least a dozen considerably more insoluble in its place.

With Jeremiah my task ends. I have pointed out the particular portions of Israelite history in which the theory of the documents at present in the ascendant appears to fail; but it would be a mistake to leave the subject without noting the fact that the absolute confidence in this theory felt some time back appears to be a good deal shaken. It is a matter of satisfaction that this should be the case. That the books of the Old Testament have never been revised or edited in times considerably later than those in which they were written would be a bold and utterly unwarrantable assertion. Yet it is assumed that all who question the infallibility of critics who claim to be sure, down to a quarter of a verse, by what author, and at what date it was written, are thereby committing themselves to the assertion that every line, if not every word, in the documents of Hebrew history is necessarily homogeneous. I, at least, have never made any such assertion, nor do I know anyone who has done so. I am ready to admit that the Hebrew Scriptures may have gone through the same process as the Saxon Chronicle has done; but I agree with a recent reviewer in the *Guardian*¹ in deprecating an amount of con-

¹ November 14, 1900. The reviewer seems to forget, however, that English tradition has handed down the Saxon Chronicle as well as

confidence of assertion in regard to the literature of another country which would be considered unwarrantable if indulged in in reference to our own. There is a tendency, as the reviewer very justly says, to "overdo" this freedom of assertion. It is against this pretence to certainty on points of great difficulty that these pages are a protest, as well as against the assumptions which compel us to correct or contradict our authorities at every step. There is a humorous story told by Dean Ramsay in his "Reminiscences" of a boaster who, in the presence of a Scotchman, hazarded the assertion that he had killed a tiger sixteen feet long. His story was promptly capped by one about a skate caught off Thurso which covered half an acre of ground. The first narrator wished to challenge the second. The latter declined the combat, but suggested that if a little were taken off the length of the tiger, some consequent abatement might be made in the area of the skate. In a similar friendly spirit we may express our readiness to withdraw any criticisms of the subjective school which may seem a little severe if they will only withdraw their "Rainbow," their "Polychrome," and other similar "Bibles"; if they will admit that the problem of assigning the contents of the Hebrew Scriptures to their various authors is perhaps a little complex and difficult; that it has not as yet in every case been solved; that in some cases it may even prove to be insoluble; and that it is not a sign of absolute imbecility to continue to doubt whether, after all, Deuteronomy is really to be assigned to the age of Ahaz or Hezekiah. If these trifling concessions are made, the work of criticism would go on a good deal more smoothly and, I venture to think, a great deal more rapidly. We are justified in asking for the admission that the problem is one on which perfect certainty is not very easily attainable. To say nothing about the researches of Professor Margoliouth in his "Lines of Defence of Biblical Revelation," we may at least contend that if the *Times*, in a recent article on Cretan discovery, could tell us that a few hours with the spade has done more than years of critical discussion and research—if a University Professor of Modern History can say, "Such mistakes have been made, that unless external evidence is also produced, no matured mind can rest satisfied with evidence which is only internal,"¹ we may be permitted to doubt whether the conclusions of certain critics, whose industry and learning we do not dispute, are as certain as they appear to be to themselves. So long as we are allowed to teach our flocks that the Hebrew

Florence of Worcester's revival of it. It is perhaps premature to conclude that the Hebrews have handed down their Florence of Worcester alone.

¹ Smyth, "Lectures on the French Revolution," iii. 278.

Scriptures are in their main features Hebrew history and not Hebrew fiction, we are not concerned to controvert, even though we disbelieve, particular theories as to their mode of transmission to us. So long as we are allowed, with our Lord Himself after His Resurrection, to regard the law, the prophets, and the Psalms to be the true order of the Divine teaching to Israel, we are not concerned to discuss the question whether the Books of Moses, as they have come down to us, contain infinitesimal additions or not.

And here I leave the subject. My reasons for adventuring myself into this field of investigation I have already explained. I believe that the question—and it is a very great and important question—has not yet been sufficiently considered from all the possible points of view. Between the positions of the traditional school, which has been accustomed to forbid all investigation, and those of the subjective school, which is accustomed to rear a pyramid upon its apex, there is room for a third school, which deems the middle way the safest, and which refuses to proclaim the results of its researches as final until they rest upon an unassailable basis of ascertained fact. That school is yet in its infancy; but we may venture to predict that it will one day come to the front in Old Testament, as it has already done in New Testament, criticism, and that its chief upholders, in the one as in the other, will be found among the English-speaking peoples of the earth. The early stages of scientific inquiry, in whatever direction, have been, and are still, marked by crude and one-sided theories, put forth with a confidence which is ultimately found to be misplaced. On their ruins arise those of a wiser, soberer, sounder school of investigators, who have learned reverence and caution from the mistakes of their predecessors. A short time ago physical science refused to see anything beyond the laws its own researches had discovered. Now it finds that, whatever the law, some mystery always lies behind. Biblical criticism will be found to follow a similar course in its development. At the present moment the reaction from the old religious dogmatism is carrying us too far in the direction of naturalism. But in the end a chastened spirit of inquiry will discern in the Jewish, as well as the Christian, revelation traces altogether special and peculiar of the Finger of God.

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