

THE EVIDENCE OF 1 SAMUEL TO THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE HEXATEUCHAL RECORD

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IN modern times the critical theory of Hexateuchal history has been so widely adopted that few have undertaken to dispute it on purely critical, i.e. non-doctrinal grounds. Dr. Orr, it is true, put up a masterly defence for the Conservative view in his *Problem of the Old Testament*, and more recently the scientific research of Dr. Yahuda has severely shaken some of the erstwhile unquestioned assumptions of liberal scholars, but nevertheless the weight of opinion amongst scholars still favours the newer theories and favours them on the grounds mainly of the historical and literary evidence of the documents themselves.

This being the case it is obvious that to argue disputed passages on the one hand, and to research minutely into the history and formation of the Hebrew language on the other, can never of themselves suffice to overthrow the present supremacy of Radical opinion. Not that these methods are valueless by any means. Indeed as regards linguistic research it is probable that therein lies the key to a really scientific understanding of the Scriptural narratives. But at the present moment it is not so much the language as the facts en clothed in the language which are primarily called into question, and that on the serious ground of incoherence and inconsistency. It is then upon this question that Liberal opinion must be met if its ascendancy is to be shaken. The books themselves must be consulted ; their testimony to the general truth of the Old Testament narrative sought after and evaluated, and if upon that question alone the modern theories fail to maintain themselves, then the field will be open for a truly scientific research along more conservative lines.

Now in dealing with the Pentateuch from this point of view one very obvious difficulty strikes us right at the outset. The books of the Hexateuch have been so badly mauled and tattered by recent investigators, that their evidence in their own favour can never be accepted by advanced writers. It will be remembered, however, that the trump card of the Radical scholar has always been the supposed ignorance of Mosaic institutions on the part of the Prophetic and Historical writers. If this ignorance accords with the facts, then at once there is a strong historical case established against the trustworthiness of the Hexateuch. If not however, then one of the main props of the modern theory is withdrawn. It is the investigation of this question with special reference to the book of 1 Samuel that is the object of our present study.

To state then first of all the Radical case, it is maintained that the Book of I Samuel does little or nothing to support the authenticity of the Mosaic documents. The existence of an elaborate Temple or Tabernacle, with elaborate fittings and an equally elaborate ritual : the existence of a thorough going priestly and Levitical system centred around one foremost and Central Sanctuary : the existence above all of an intricate code of laws concerning every conceivable branch of political and religious life : all these the writer or writers of I Samuel are supposed to a greater or lesser extent to ignore. The Israel of which they speak is an ignorant conglomeration of superstitious and heathen tribes, portrayed at an early point in their evolution out of political and religious chaos into that nation, unified in worship and government, which later historical idealists would like them to have been from the first. Whether the book of Samuel was written early or late (and most critics agree that it is substantially [at least] fairly early), this is the historical situation which it portrays ; and the tragedy of the whole affair is this, that this picture so poignantly portrayed by advanced scholars has been allowed with scarcely a single effective protest to capture the imaginations of modern Old Testament investigators. What its basis is in actual fact it will now be our business to consider.

In the first place then let us study the question from a purely historical standpoint, and here at once we must be struck by the amazing way in which the historical books do upon close examination testify to their own historical accuracy. To take one very minor point, in the very first verse of I Samuel (I Sam. i. 1), we are told that Samuel was a man of Ephraim. Now in Chronicles it expressly states that Samuel was a Levite (this agreeing, of course, with his ministry in the Temple—as we shall see later). Here then is a supposed discrepancy upon which some commentators have pounced. But already in Judges 17, the Biblical record has referred us to a man who was at once a Levite and a Bethlehemite ; and more than that, in Joshua we read that Levitical families were established in the hill country of Ephraim (mainly in the neighbourhood of Shechem). None of this, of course, argues well for the Radical assumption that the Levitical order was a late Priestly invention. The further fact too that Samuel ministered to the Lord in Shiloh at the tabernacle or temple there, corroborates amply the narrative in Joshua xviii. 1, where we have a clear statement that the Tabernacle was pitched in Shiloh—even stronger independent testimony being borne by Jeremiah vii. 12, and Psalm lxxviii. 60. Indeed, the very fact that the Tabernacle existed at all under Samuel or rather Eli has forced a majority of scholars into accepting the existence of at least some sort of a tent of meeting even in wilderness days, this being usually identified with the tent which Moses pitched outside the camp in Exodus.

A further significant fact in the narrative of I Samuel is this, that the ark of God not only lies in the temple at Shiloh, but is also carried into battle as prescribed in the law of Moses in Numbers x. (cf. too, Joshua iii.). Like the Tabernacle, the Ark is something which no theorist has yet been able completely to dispense with. It has been made into a fetish chest, the tables of stone within it have been transformed

into mere lumps of Sinaitic rock ; but none the less the Ark itself remains (and with the Ark the Cherubim) ; for it is impossible to believe that every reference to the Ark, and especially in these wonder-stories of its adventures in Philistia, is merely the invention of a late and credulous scribe. The Ark remains, and in it we have the guarantee of at least one Mosaic institution.

In I Samuel vii. 12, again, we have a slight but important reference to the memorial stone at Ebenezer—this bearing witness to the antiquity of the custom of marking historical sites by memorial cairns. The significance of this reference is that where in the Hexateuch mention is made of the erection of such memorial stones, Radical scholars immediately suspect a hidden reference to ancient heathen Massebah or stone altars. When, however, the same customs appear in the later days of Samuel, and even Isaiah (Isaiah xix. 19), and are sanctioned even by opponents of heathen worship, there can remain little point in attempting seriously to maintain such hypotheses. Not of course, but that in the days of blatant national apostasy under the Judges these historical sites might not have been used as centres of heathen worship—thus far we can have no quarrel with our Liberal friends. But that they were centres of heathen worship from the very beginning, that is in our view an unwarrantable assumption in the light of such later references to the custom. The only possible explanation which can be offered by such theorists, i.e. that Isaiah sublimated an earlier heathen custom, is in violent conflict with the usual method of the prophets, which was not to sublimate but to root out and to overthrow all idolatrous practices.

A further interesting point in connection with Bethshemesh is that when the Ark was returned to that place by the Philistines it was immediately taken charge of by the Levites. According to modern writers this is, of course, merely a late theory of the editor, since the Levites at that period did not exist as a separate order. The absurdity of this editorial theory is, we are told, fully exposed by the miraculous rapidity with which the Levites appear to take charge of the Ark in true Mosaic style. Unfortunately for this contention however, the works of modern writers seem to ignore the fact that since the days of Joshua, Bethshemesh had been one of the Levitical cities.

Samuel's abbreviated history of Israel's past in Chapter 12 is, of course, so well known that it hardly needs mention here. As an important testimony to the accuracy of the earlier books, it has, naturally, been assigned by advanced scholars to a much later age. Into the reasons for this later dating it is not at the moment our business to inquire, but it is noticeable that here as elsewhere in Scripture the sequence of Israel's history is given as Revelation, Apostasy, Repentance, and not, in accordance with modern theory, as Heathenism, Baal-worship, and a slowly evolving Yahweh worship (N.B.—For the testimony of the Prophets, see Hosea, Amos, and even Ezekiel). As to the general credibility of the Scriptural as opposed to the critical theory, it may suffice to point out that the optimistic view of history as a long progression—a view so prevalent in the eighteenth and later nineteenth centuries—is one for which history as a whole affords little

proof, at least within so small a period as 600 years. A cyclic view such as we have in the Scriptures does seem to accord better with the general facts of history—and if a slow drift of progress can be discerned over a long period, it is rather of that Goethean spiral nature, which does not in any way conflict with the narrative as we have it either in 1 Samuel or in the so-called Judges framework. But that by the way.

One further important point in connection with the speeches of Samuel is that in his call to the people to repent (1 Samuel vii. 3), Samuel uses almost exactly the same words as those used by Joshua (in Joshua xxiv. 23) when he delivered his parting charge to the people (cf. too, Genesis xxxv. 2). From this significant fact we are just as much at liberty to conclude that Samuel was familiar with the words of Joshua (perhaps through a study of the sacred books when at Shiloh) as are more advanced scholars to argue a paucity of imagination on the part of a later writer or writers.

The sacred record receives confirmation again when we study the disposition of the tribes at the time of Samuel. Thus for example, reference is made to the tribe of Gad in Gilead, which agrees well with the account of Moses' assessment of Gilead to Gad in the thirty-second chapter of Numbers (cf. too, Joshua ii.). In connection with this question of the tribes again the status of the Kenites would appear to be much the same at the time of Samuel as it was in the days of Moses and Joshua, Saul's favouring of the Kenites in xv. 6, agreeing well with Moses' alliance with and honouring of them in Exodus xviii. The correctness of the dating of the Philistine menace, as confirmed by modern archæology, is, too, not without its significance in view of the generally assumed muddled-headedness of later compilers.

One final point of historical evidence : in Samuel x. 25, reference is made to the writing down of the transaction then concluded in a book, a reference back to the book of Joshua (xxiv. 26) here being unavoidable. Not of course, that the two books are necessarily the same, or necessarily the history books of the period. But they do lend weight to the conviction that the Biblical record is based upon contemporary sources and not merely upon floating traditions; the conclusion being inevitable that the Jews were in the habit, even at this time, of leaving written documents, for transmission to posterity. Indeed, now that the ability of Moses to write has been so fully demonstrated, there can be no point in denying Scriptural evidence upon this important question. It is up to the Liberal scholar to produce the very strongest of evidence if he would have us believe that the direct statements of sources in 1 Samuel x. 25, and Joshua xxiv. 26 are false, and that whether piously so or otherwise.

Historically then we have seen that 1 Samuel does in many significant if minor points, confirm the records of Israel's national development as we have them in the Hexateuch and not in present-day text books. It now remains to examine whether or not the same can be said in the religious sphere, and here it must be remembered that the Liberal claim is far more challenging and serious. Is there any direct evidence that the worship of the Lawbooks was in force, or even known at all, in this period? or must we conclude that after all that worship

was but a late creation of priestly scribes, transporting back their laws, etc., into an obsolete wilderness setting in order to invest them with a more ancient and weighty authority? That is the clear issue which must now be decided, and upon that issue hangs our whole conception of the religious history of God's people and of the history of God's dealings with them on the behalf of mankind.

In the first place then reference must again be made to the Tabernacle. Already we have seen that the Tabernacle did exist at Shiloh in the time of Eli, and although no description of it is given, yet to judge from the presence of the Ark within it and the nature of the references to it (*the tent of meeting*) there can be no reasonable doubt but that this was the identical tabernacle used during wilderness days. Wellhausen's absurd hypothesis of a multiplicity of tents, based solely on I Chronicles has been completely demolished by Baxter¹, while as for the theory that this was merely the "crude" tent of Exodus xxxiii. 7, that theory may be held, but the onus of proof rests upon those who hold it. In any case however, whether the tent be elaborate or "crude" this central sanctuary, the focus of Israel's worship, the repository of the Ark of God, still remains.

And central sanctuary, that is precisely what the tent of meeting at Shiloh was. Argue how men may about the date of the Deuteronomic Code, the records bear ample testimony to the existence of a Central Sanctuary at least as early as the time of Samuel. Do we not read for example that Elkanah went up from year to year to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh? Do we not read (I Samuel ii. 22) that all Israel came up likewise? And where is the direct evidence to contradict these historical assertions? The altars during the period of the Judges? The altars set up by Samuel himself at Ramah and Gilgal? But these have little or no bearing whatever upon the existence of a Central Sanctuary. On any showing the period of the Judges was one of tumult and apostasy, but the frequenting of heathen Canaanite shrines at such a period does not by any means disprove the existence of a Central Sanctuary for Yahweh worship. As for the altars of Samuel, there seems to be little doubt from a study of Jeremiah and Psalm lxxviii, but that the sanctuary at Shiloh had been destroyed by the Philistines before Samuel was established as a Prophet and Judge. The Central Sanctuary law may at times have been in abeyance; it may never have worked well, through the opposition of heathen groves (cf. I Samuel xv. 23); it may finally have been rendered completely inoperative for a period; but the fact that a law is in abeyance or that it does not work well or that it becomes in certain circumstances inapplicable, is no proof whatever of its non-existence.

So far however, it must be admitted that little testimony has been given to the existence of an elaborate ritual in connection with this Central Sanctuary. The Tabernacle itself is there, but what of its furniture and ornaments, what of its servants and ministers, above all what of its sacrifices? These are questions which must now be dealt with; and in each case we shall find that I Samuel does not fail to support the Hexateuchal narrative.

¹ *Sanctuary and Sacrifice.*

Little reference it is true is made to the fittings of the tent of meeting, but then there was little occasion to make mention of them. Indeed, meticulous description would only have led to scepticism and suspicion amongst our more Liberal friends. Where, however, there are references made in the course of the narrative, we have every reason to believe that they can be trusted. And more than that, they embolden us to infer, not, as by the precarious silence argument, that the fittings were rude and simple, but rather that there were far more ornaments, ceremonies, etc., than those specifically mentioned. Thus for example, when we read in 1 Samuel iii. 3 of the lamp of God, or in 1 Samuel xxi. 3-6, of the shewbread (this at Nob), we may be sure that these are but samples of many institutions dating from wilderness days. Again, the mention in iii. 14 of pots, cauldrons, kettles, pans, hooks, etc., presumes a whole array of Temple instruments, whilst the very fact that sacrifices and incense (ii. 28) are mentioned makes inevitable the existence of altars, censers and the like as laid down in the Mosaic Code.

Again, the service of the Temple, although admittedly corrupt under Eli's sons, appears to conform in many details to the Mosaic pattern. Mention has already been made of the Levites and of their especial care of the Ark of God, but apart from the Levites we also read of the service women (1 Samuel ii. 22)—details of this office being given in Exodus xix. 21. The fact too, that the Shiloh Sanctuary was in the charge of an hereditary Aaronic priesthood is surely not without significance, and that the priestly establishment was on a large scale is suggested by the number slain in the slaughter at Nob (1 Samuel xxii. 18, and cf. Psalm lxxviii. 64). The mention of the linen ephod as a priestly vestment (ii. 18, and ii. 28) also accords well with the provisions of Exodus xxviii. 6.

Finally in the matter of sacrifices, although this field has been well covered by Baxter, it is interesting again to notice how the Book of Samuel by many incidental references testifies to the conducting of sacrifices according to Pentateuchal regulation. Building precariously upon the corrupt practices of Eli's sons, Wellhausen and his followers have maintained that regular daily sacrifice was unknown in pre-exilic Israel, and that in any case sacrifices were boiled and not roasted. In more recent years a further attempt has been made to rob sacrifices of any propitiatory significance (Robertson Smith)—propitiation being, of course, at the very heart of the Mosaic institutions. How groundless these theories are, as applied at any rate to the period of Samuel, will be proved by an examination of the text itself.

But first of all let us concede one point : no mention is made of any daily sacrifice at this epoch. Indeed during the ministration of Samuel, that is to say after the fall of Shiloh, it is more than probable that the daily sacrifice lapsed altogether—the Central Sanctuary law now in any case being in abeyance and altars being constructed in accordance with the ordinances of Exodus. Even whilst Eli was priest it is just possible that there was much slackness about the daily offering, although we must not forget that in the story there is no real occasion to mention it (and would it not have been a late gloss if mentioned ?). The text of 1 Samuel i. 3 does at least however, seem to imply regular

and not just haphazard offerings, and it is surely significant, as will appear later, that the offering of which we hear most in the course of the Book is the regular burnt-offering.

And now to come down to the specific references themselves. In I Samuel sacrifices are referred to (whether generally or particularly) in the following verses or passages, i. 3, ii. 13, ii. 29, iii. 14, iv. 3, vi. 14-15, vii. 9, ix. 12, x. 8, xi. 15, xiii. 9, and xx. 6. The burnt offering is mentioned on at least four different occasions, once at Shiloh (?), once at Bethshemesh, once at Mizpah, once at Gilgal. At Bethshemesh it is offered in conjunction with the peace-offering, according to Mosaic institution—and the peace-offering is again referred to in xi. 15, when Samuel sacrifices at Gilgal. This reference is particularly significant as belonging organically to the "early" account of the foundation of the Monarchy, although of course, it has had to be ascribed to a later hand in view of this mention of the peace offering and in view of the national prominence given to Samuel. Of the three other main offerings, two are never mentioned at all, the trespass and the sin offering, whilst the third, the guilt offering, occurs in iv. 3, where, however, it is a Philistine parallel and not the Mosaic institution which is in question.

Now what of the details of these sacrifices? Were they conducted in a primitive and heathen manner or after the careful provisions of the Mosaic Code? As regards the minute details we have of course no evidence, since it is obviously not the historian's task to furnish elaborate descriptions of the sacrificial system then in vogue, but one or two details have come down to us which seem to point to an observance of the Pentateuchal ritual. In the first place there seems to be little doubt but that these were roast and not boiled sacrifices if all the evidence is taken into account.¹ Again we notice that provision is made for the priest (ii. 12 ff.), whilst it is expressly stated that the fat is holy to the Lord and must be burned before him (cf. Leviticus iii. and iv where this is prescribed for the peace and especially the sin offering). The offering at the presentation of Samuel is again very important—and it is curious how often scholars have failed to understand this offering through supposing that Samuel was presented solely as a Nazarite (on the strength of course of i. 11). The fact of the matter is that Samuel was dedicated to the Lord primarily as a Levite—(this explaining his service in the Temple)—and the details of the offering, the bullocks together with fine flour and oil (wine!), agree almost exactly with those laid down for the presentation of Levites in Numbers viii. Surely here is strong enough evidence for the antiquity, not only of the Nazaritic order (which is admitted) but also of the Mosaic Levitical order. The only other conclusion is that here again the hand of a Redactor has been busily at work—and an extraordinarily skilful hand in this instance.

One further question: What was the meaning of all this sacrificial slaughter? According to the law, propitiation; but recently the view has held sway that the propitiatory formed but a small element in the early Jewish conception of sacrifice. In pre-exilic, i.e. pre-Levi-

¹ On this detailed question see Baxter.

ticus Israel a sacrifice was, we are told, primarily a communal meal, a meal that is to say shared by all the members of a clan in company with their tribal God. Only later did the idea of propitiation creep in and oust the earlier theory. Now in 1 Samuel it must be admitted that sacrifices were accompanied by communal meals, and times of jollification and feasting always followed upon the offerings to Yahweh. But this fact we need not even trace back to the decay during the period of the Occupation, since it was laid down in the Mosaic legislation itself (Deuteronomy xii., etc., speaking of times of eating and rejoicing upon the occasion of the annual sacrifice). The question is, however, Does that exhaust the Jewish conception, or has the Propitiatory teaching of the Leviticus Code also its parallel in the historical literature? In answer to this question it is almost sufficient to point to such a title as guilt offering as proof of the presence of a propitiatory element, whilst in confirmation of this presence we have the striking words in Chapter iii : "That the iniquities of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." If these words do not teach propitiation, then it is idle to ask what words of Scripture do.

Finally, a few scattered points which support our main contention i.e. that worship in the age of Samuel was generally conducted after the Mosaic pattern. In x. 19, reference is made to the casting of the Lot, a further Pentateuchal institution. The sin of eating blood, too, is mentioned in xiv. 32-36, and for this we have legislation in Leviticus iii. 17, etc. Saul's suppression of familiar spirits in xxviii. 3 is a fulfilment of the command of Moses in Leviticus xix. 31, etc. The feast of the New Moon is celebrated in xx. 5 as laid down in Leviticus xxiii. 1, whilst finally the devoting of the Amalekites in Chapter xv. seems to be in accord with the provisions of Leviticus xxvii. 28-29. All these are minor points no doubt, but significant if we remember that the writer of 1 Samuel was clearly not writing a thesis upon the functioning of Mosaic Law at this period, but merely recounting the general history of the age, both official and biographical.

Two last points which we must touch upon before bringing this subject to a close, and those the two objections which can be raised against the obvious results of this examination. Of these objections, the first is clearly futile—and that is the objection that the passages in question are all the late interpolations of a priestly hand. This of course, amounts to nothing more or less than taking away the evidence in order to protest volubly that it is not there—a childish and unscholarly trick with which we can have nothing to do. For what are the grounds upon which such passages are rejected? Simply that they do not fit in with the new theory of Israel's history. And the proof of that theory? Why simply that such passages are not to be found in the Historical Books. A vicious circle of an argument indeed—and one vicious alike on critical and we venture to suggest moral grounds. If this is all the evidence which can be produced for post-dating these references, then the references remain and the things referred to remain, and not until the most solid proof to the contrary is advanced, both linguistic, stylistic, and historical, will we concede to scholars the right so to play about with the text.

And now for the second and more serious argument, the theory that, as regards our second class of references at least, we have allusions to customs of worship already observed but not yet codified—customs that is to say which were being gradually assimilated and developed from the already existing Canaanite Baal-worship. The strength of this argument is, of course, that it does not rest upon any subjective treatment of the text and yet adequately covers the facts from an advanced point of view. And yet even this objection is based upon an assumption for which there exists not a scrap of historical evidence ; the assumption first of all that Israel was not capable of creating a worship of her own before entering the Promised Land (and that after Egyptian tutelage) ; the assumption that amongst the Hebrews there did not exist a man able to codify such a worship (and that despite the Moses tradition) ; the assumption that the Hebrews were crude and uncultured desert tribes, veritable *enfants de la Nature* ; the assumption finally that God is not able to reveal to man how He would have man direct his worship towards Him and direct his conduct towards his fellow-man.

In contrast to these unprovable assumptions, evidence exists to show that already before the day of Moses codes of law and regulations of worship had been drawn up. Granted then a man of culture and learning like Moses and there is nothing improbable in the Scriptural account. If we prefer a modern hypothesis, well and good, but 1 Samuel does at least bear witness to the truth of the Biblical record and is in no way inconsistent with the codes and regulations of the Law. The Scriptural story is at any rate a tenable alternative to the critical reconstruction—so much our Liberal friends must admit in the light of the evidence from the books themselves. Which of the two we prefer must depend largely upon our understanding of the Ancient World in general, our view of the moral standards and reliability of the writers of Scripture (whether contemporary or otherwise) and our belief or disbelief, in the reality of God's revelation to and working through, the hearts and minds and actions of His servants.

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