

to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." But let it be granted that sarcasm is rarely justifiable: I am satisfied then with believing that Christ used it rarely, as here. There were obvious and special reasons against teaching *this* lesson to those particular hearers in any more direct way.

I may add that, if this were the primary meaning of the parable, it is easy to understand its memory being lost at an early period. The Fathers, as we have seen, generally treated it exactly as most commentators do to-day: seeing that, from any point of view, it directly referred to local and special circumstances that had passed away long before any commentator wrote about it, it would be strange if a tradition as to its true meaning had survived.

Our Lord says nothing as to how the Unjust Steward's last dishonesty fared. For those of whom Christ spoke the parable history soon filled up the blank, and its answer was the fall of Jerusalem and ruin of the Jewish nation. The plain moral of the story is just that which our Lord draws from it, and it applies to us all,—that unfaithfulness, temporising, half-hearted service, means double ruin. We can as little serve two masters as the Jews of our Lord's day, but we are quite as fond of trying to do so.

ALEX. R. EAGAR, D.D.

THE POSITION OF APHEK.

(A) *Judges* i. 31. Neither did Asher drive out the inhabitants of Accho . . . nor of Aphik.

(B) 1 *Sam.* iv. 1b. [Israel] pitched beside Eben-ezer, and the Philistines pitched in Aphek (BA*PHEK).

(C) 1 *Sam.* xxix. 1. The Philistines gathered all their armies to Aphek (APHEKAH). (Cp. 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 4. The Philistines gathered themselves together and came and pitched in Shunem.)

(D) 1 *Kings* xx. 26. Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians and went up to Aphek (APHEKAH) [with the intention of fighting in the plain (MISHOR), *ib.*, v. 23].

(E) *Ib.*, v. 30. The rest [of the Syrians] fled to Aphek (APHEKĀH), into the city (EL HA'IR).

(F) 2 *Kings* xiii. 17. Thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek (BA'PHEK), (Elisha to Joash, son of Jehoahaz).

There are three theories as to the identity of Aphek. According to the first there are *three* Apheks, *one*, mentioned in the passage marked (B), in the Shephelah; *the second*, mentioned in (A) (C), in the northern part of the Philistine plain; *the third*, mentioned in (D) (E) (F), beyond Jordan "in the gorge of Fik, up which the great road ran from Scythopolis to Damascus" (G. A. Smith).

The second theory identifies the first two Apheks mentioned in the Philistine wars, but keeps separate the third Aphek, the scene of conflict with Syria.

The third theory (cp. W. R. Smith OTJC, p. 435) identifies all three and represents both the Philistines and the Syrians, *i.e.* the enemy from the S.W. and the enemy from the N.E., as making the same place, *i.e.* an Aphek in the north of the Philistine plain, the base of operations against Israel.

Now Prof. G. A. Smith, a competent judge, briefly pronounces this triple identification to be "out of the question" (*Hist. Geog.*, p. 401, *note*). His main objection is, I suppose, that the theory brings the Syrians too far to the west before delivering their attack on Israel.

Will a slight modification of the rejected theory meet Prof. Smith's objection? There seem to me indications that Aphek was the name not only of a city in the north of the Philistine plain, but also of a district stretching eastward from it, from which the city derived its name.

In the first place, the name "Aphek" (=ĀPHĪK, "water-course," or *collectively*, "watercourses") does not suit well a city, but it *is* appropriate for a district much cut up by a river and its tributaries. In the second place, a comparison of the two passages marked (D) (E) suggests that "Aphek" might be something else besides the name of a town. The passages seem at first to say that the Syrians fought at Aphek, and fled to Aphek! The exact wording of v. 30, however, seems to impress on us that while the fight was in the Aphek district, the flight was to Aphek city. Probably the Syrians were cut off in their retreat and driven *westward*, hence the great slaughter and the capture of Ben-hadad himself.

If it be granted that there was a *district* named "Aphek," we can have little doubt of its nature. It was a plain (EMEK,

1 Kings xx. 28) cut up by watercourses. It is surely to be identified rather with the whole or part of the great plain watered by the Kishon than with the neighbourhood of the modern Fik east of Jordan. In the first place, "the gorge of Fik" is¹ not a plain nor a plateau. Secondly, the Syrians would not "go up" (v. 26) to Fik, whereas to reach any part of the plain of Esdrêlon they would, after crossing the Jordan, ascend the long valley of Jezreel. The language of chapter xx. suggests a powerful offensive campaign on the part of Syria, and small defensive power on the part of Israel (v. 27). As, however, Ben-hadad did not choose on this occasion to risk his chariots among the hills round Samaria, the most likely battle-ground was some part of the plain of Esdrêlon. Israel could hardly venture to cross the Jordan to meet the far superior forces of the enemy.

Again, the victory of Joash over Syria "in Aphek" (2 Kings xiii. 17) may well have been fought W. and not E. of Jordan. Israel had been brought very low under his father Jehoahaz; "neither did he [the king of Syria] leave unto Jehoahaz but 50 horsemen and 10 chariots and 10,000 footmen" (v. 7). The battle in Aphek marked the turn of the tide of Syrian conquest, which must surely ere this have crossed the Jordan.

With regard to (C), I agree with Prof. Smith (*Hist. Geog.*, p. 401) that 1 Samuel xxix. 1 marks an earlier step in the campaign than 1 Samuel xxviii. 4. First the general order to march on the Aphek district was given to the Philistine armies, and then a camp was formed at Shunem, which was perhaps within that district.

That the same Aphek is intended in (B) as in (C) is probable in itself, and is confirmed by the successful results of both campaigns. Israel was more open to attack from Esdrêlon than from the S.W.

I have not dealt with the references to Aphek contained in the book of Joshua, partly because they seem to me to throw no light on the question of the identification of the Syrian with the Philistine Aphek, partly because I am not concerned to deny the possible existence of other Apheks in Palestine. What does seem clear is that the only Aphek of historic importance mentioned in the O.T. is a city (in the north of the Philistine plain) deriving its name from a plain stretching eastward which is identical with part or whole of the well-known plain of Esdrêlon.

W. E. BARNES.

¹ Neither EMEK nor MISHOR.