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THE ORIGIN OF THE AARONITE  
PRIESTHOOD.

It is a well-known fact that whereas in the Deuteronomic legislation the clergy of Israel are referred to simply as Levitical priests without distinction of rank, in Ezekiel we find two classes, the Levitical priests the sons of Zadok, and the Levites. It is also generally agreed that this distinction arose from the unwillingness of the sons of Zadok, the priests of Jerusalem, to admit to like privileges with themselves the Levites, who until the days of Josiah's reformation had ministered in the various local sanctuaries or high places. Although the record of this reformation is provokingly meagre (for the circumstantial account of 2 Kings xxiii is in its present form the work of a considerably later period), yet, from a comparison of 2 Kings xxiii 9 with Deut. xviii 6-8 and with Ezek. xlv 9-15, it is scarcely possible to doubt that the intention of the original reformers (viz. that the priests who were thrown out of employment by the abolition of the country sanctuaries should have the right to earn a livelihood by ministering in the Temple at Jerusalem) was thwarted by the sons of Zadok, who were not at all disposed to view with favour the influx of a considerable body of men, probably of somewhat inferior social position, who would share their revenues. The plea on which these country clergy were ousted from their strict legal rights, was that they had been guilty of idolatrous practices; and though, doubtless, the worship at the country sanctuaries had been marred by many grave corruptions, nevertheless, judging from Ezekiel's account of idolatry at Jerusalem,

the sons of Zadok were hardly in a position to throw stones. From Ezekiel's emphatic declaration that the country clergy must be degraded we may infer that from the year 621 B. C. till the destruction of the Temple a pretty severe struggle had raged in Jerusalem between the dispossessed clergy and the corporation of the sons of Zadok; a struggle in which the latter had given practical illustration of the adage that possession is nine points of the law.

But in this controversy the point at issue is not the descent of the contending parties. The sons of Zadok are represented as superior to the ordinary Levites, not by reason of their descent from Zadok, but by the fact that they only have remained faithful to the sanctuary at Jerusalem now regarded as alone orthodox. It is, so to speak, not so much a question of canonical ordination as of canonical behaviour after ordination. It is therefore the more remarkable that little more than a century after Ezekiel the distinction between the two orders of clergy is represented as entirely one of family; and the first rank claim their privileges not as sons of Zadok, but as sons of Aaron, the brother of Moses. Why is it that the Priestly Code, while maintaining the distinction of the lower grade of clergy, the Levites, on the one hand, on the other hand designates the higher grade not sons of Zadok, but sons of Aaron?

In the first place it may be regarded as certain that the Jerusalem priests in the days of Ezekiel did not base their claim to exclusive privileges on the ground of descent from Aaron. Had they done so, they would have been compelled to admit at least many who had never ministered at Jerusalem; since it was never pretended that the family of Aaron was *limited* to the house of Zadok; and it would scarcely be safe to infer from Ezra ii 62 that a son of Aaron might be put out of his privileges as such without losing also his status as a Levite. Obviously descent from Aaron was a new claim in the fifth century B. C. This of course must not be understood as implying that the name of Aaron was unknown before that period; but only that about this time it acquired a new importance.

We therefore come to the enquiry, Who was Aaron? and this question, simple as it seems, is not easily answered. The traditional view, which rests entirely on the Priestly Code, is, as

is well known, altogether impossible in the face of statements in the older portions of the Pentateuch. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that the description of the sanctuary in Exod. xxxiii 7-11 not only makes no mention of Aaron, but leaves absolutely no room for him, at all events as priest. In this section Moses is obviously chief priest (for the functions discharged by the priests in the older portions of the Old Testament are precisely those of Moses here); and Joshua, his sole assistant, is what we may describe as an apprentice priest, and in that capacity is represented in another passage also (Exod. xxiv 13, 14) as accompanying his master at least some distance up the ascent of the holy mountain, and waiting for him, apart from the people, till his return. This description of Moses' priesthood is generally assigned to *E*, which mentions Aaron indeed, but in a connexion which seems to imply that he and Hur were elders or seers, *sheikhs* rather than priests. (See Exod. xxiv 14, xvii 10-12.) This representation of Aaron in *E* is parallel to that in *ℱ*, where he occurs in conjunction with Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel (Exod. xxiv 1, 2). Wellhausen long ago pointed out that in the earlier *stratum* of *ℱ*, in connexion with Moses, Aaron's name did not originally occur at all, and, where it is found in such connexion, seems to be the work of a redactor. It is to be noted that *ℱ* mentions other priests as associated with Moses, but Aaron is not one of them (Exod. xxiv 1, 2).

That the Judæan tradition down to the time of the exile contained no reference to Aaron as a priest associated with Moses is made probable also by a study of the Book of Deuteronomy. To any one acquainted with the narrative of *ℱE* it would appear inconceivable that Moses in a retrospect of his own life could possibly ignore Aaron. Yet Aaron's name is found in the whole book only in three places, viz. chap. ix 20, in connexion with the golden calf (though in vv. 12, 16, 21—cf. Exod. xxxii 35—the calf is made not by Aaron but by the people), and x 6 and xxxii 50, where his death is mentioned. In view of this scanty mention of Aaron in Deuteronomy it is not unreasonable to suppose that his name was there introduced by one of the several editors, who endeavoured to supply what must have seemed to all later readers an obvious omission. It has already been noticed

that Deuteronomy recognizes only Levitical priests and knows nothing of any sons of Aaron.

Moreover, outside the Pentateuch the only pre-Deuteronomic passage in which Aaron is mentioned is Mic. vi 4. Here one is sorely tempted to regard the name of Aaron, if not of Miriam also, as the addition of a later editor. On the whole, however, the very strangeness of the combination, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, makes it unsafe to omit either name. But Micah's words, if genuine, are no proof that the prophet regarded Aaron as priest. It is possible that he refers to some exploit of Aaron omitted in the Pentateuch, owing to the fact that he is there transformed into a priest.

NOTE. This last passage is further remarkable for the occurrence of the name Miriam. It is noteworthy that the only other passage of the Old Testament which *looks back* to Miriam is Deut. xxiv 9, where the connexion with the context is by no means obvious; for, as Mr S. A. Cook remarks, 'It is difficult to see how Miriam's *punishment* was a warning for Israel to observe the orders of the Levites in the case of an outbreak of leprosy. The difficulty in the reference, implying a discrepancy in the tradition, suggests that Num. xii 1-15 has been pretty thoroughly revised by Rp. (the seven days' seclusion v. 15 reminds one of the Levitical enactment, Lev. xiii 5)' *Enc. Bibl.* art. 'Miriam'.

This paucity of references to Aaron is in complete harmony with the impression of the character of Aaron which we get from the Pentateuch as a whole. Whatever our views may be as to the historical reality of the Old Testament worthies, there can be no question that in the great majority of instances they are made to live and move by the art of the narrators. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Saul, David, and others stand out before us as real personages, men of flesh and bone, and of like passions with ourselves. Yet though the name Aaron occurs again and again, who has any conception of the *man* Aaron? Aaron is in fact a creation without personality; a mere puppet which performs certain priestly functions when the machinery is set in motion by Moses. In three instances only is Aaron represented as acting apart from Moses' direction, viz. in the making of the golden calf (Exod. xxxii), in the omission to eat the goat of the sin-offering (Lev. x 16), and in the quarrel with Moses (Num. xii 1). The second of these

three instances is evidently only intended to give a rule of practice for a priest visited with a great calamity. In the third instance Aaron occupies a position subordinate to that of Miriam, and it would seem that to the original story of Miriam's jealousy of Moses the name Aaron was afterwards added, to account for the fact (see verses 6-8) that to Moses, not Aaron, Jehovah made His revelation. It is surely significant that the punishment falls on Miriam only, and that Aaron, after deprecating Moses' wrath against them both in v. 11, makes entreaty for Miriam only in v. 12. In Exod. xv 20, indeed, Miriam is called 'the sister of Aaron', but this is quite consistent with the mention of Aaron as an elder, and in no wise confirms the traditional view of him.

But in the first of the three instances the case is altogether different. Here Aaron acts on his own responsibility. The golden calf is his: he demands the material of which it is made: he fashions it: and he presents it to the people, and dedicates it. Certainly if any of the recorded acts of Aaron be historical, the episode of the golden calf can best claim to be so considered. It is an episode which no one in the later period of Israelitish religion would ever have been tempted to invent. The writer of a romance would not invent sins for his saints. It is, moreover, remarkable that whereas Jeroboam the son of Nebat is branded for all time as the man 'who made Israel to sin', Aaron, who was guilty of exactly the same sin, escaped all punishment, though it is not recorded that he in any way repented of it. Only in Deut. ix 20 is it implied that Jehovah was angry with Aaron on account of the calf; whereas, according to Num. xx 12-24, Aaron was excluded from Canaan not for the idolatry of the golden calf, but on account of a sin at the waters of Meribah.

Moreover, in the narrative of the golden calf, there is another inconsistency with the traditional view. The sin is committed by Aaron, a Levite (Exod. iv 14), and indeed a chief among the Levites; but it is the Levites who are most zealous for orthodoxy (Exod. xxxii 28). Three thousand men are slain for their idolatry, but the author of the idolatry escapes unpunished.

It is difficult to resist the conviction that in its original form the story of the golden calf, so far from being a blot on the memory of Aaron, rather redounded to his credit. It must be remembered that, as far as we know, Hosea was the first to

denounce the worship of images, and that Isaiah had preached at all events for some years in Jerusalem before the temple itself was cleansed of idols. The prohibitions of image worship in *FE* cannot well at the earliest be dated before the age of Hezekiah, and it may safely be inferred that, whereas an old tradition assigned the making of the golden calf to Aaron, the orthodoxy of a later generation added the story of Moses' wrath at the discovery of the image and of his destruction of it.

That the worship of the brazen serpent was no new-fangled thing in the time of Hezekiah, but had been going on from the time of Moses, is the natural meaning of 2 Kings xviii 4; and it may therefore be concluded that, at all events down to the middle of the eighth century B.C., the making of a golden calf for worship would have been regarded as a meritorious action rather than as a sin.

In the light of these facts we are surely justified in maintaining that an Aaron was honoured in the pre-Isaianic period as the founder of the cult of the golden calf. We say *an* Aaron, for, though not improbable, it is not certain that the Aaron of golden calf fame is the same as the Aaron, the elder and seer, the associate of Hur. Where then is the legend of this Aaron to be placed? Obviously the natural place to look for it would be one of the sanctuaries which possessed golden calves; of which we are acquainted with two, Dan and Bethel<sup>1</sup>. The post-Deuteronomic author of 1 Kings xii 26-33 ascribes the institution of these sanctuaries with the golden calf at each to Jeroboam; and from his words it would naturally be inferred that down to the time of Jeroboam neither Dan nor Bethel had possessed either sanctuary, image, or priesthood.

<sup>1</sup> True, Hosea (viii 5) seems to speak of a calf belonging to Samaria, but as there is no evidence of any sanctuary at the *city* of Samaria, it is probable that the name Samaria is used to denote the northern kingdom, and that the reference is to Bethel, which Amos calls the royal sanctuary. In x 5 also Hosea mentions the *calves* of Beth-aven. But the feminine plural *גזלים*, which, in this connexion, occurs here only, is most suspicious, and the following suffixes, referring to the idol, are in the masculine singular. It is noteworthy, as a proof that the calf of Samaria is really the calf of Bethel, that Hosea says, 'The inhabitants of Samaria shall be in terror for the calf of Beth-aven'. The contemptuous alteration of *גזל* into *גזל* may be ultimately due to Amos v 5. The sarcasm in Hos. xiii 2, though somewhat obscure, seems to be directed against the principle of idolatry, rather than against any particular locality.

But we have the express testimony of Judges xviii that at Dan a sanctuary with an image or images of some sort had existed from the early days of the Judges, and that the guild of priests who ministered there 'until the day of the captivity of the land' honoured as the founder of their order a person of no less distinguished descent than Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses. It is noteworthy that Dan, as also Shiloh and Jerusalem, unlike Bethel and Beersheba, is not connected with the story of any patriarch or judge, and hence there is good reason for accepting the account of the sanctuary there as in the main accurate.

Whether the image, or one of the images, at Dan was a golden calf is doubtful. To be sure it is possible that Jeroboam may have reorganized an existing sanctuary, presenting to it a new idol: but there is no evidence in support of such a supposition beyond the statement of the compiler of the Book of Kings; and considering his complete ignorance of the origin of the priesthood at Dan as it is given in the book of Judges, his statement can have but little historical value. It is, however, evident that he considered Dan and Bethel to have been the chief sanctuaries of the northern kingdom, and in this respect his opinion is confirmed by other passages of the Old Testament, e.g. Judges xviii, 2 Sam. xx 18 (Lxx), Amos vii 13.

It is hardly necessary to state that Bethel was a sanctuary from the time of the Israelite conquest of Canaan. This is evident not only from the belief that the place had been consecrated by the revelation there made to Jacob (Gen. xxviii), but also from its mention in connexion with other primitive sanctuaries, as in 1 Sam. vii 16.

But if the writer of 1 Kings xii 26-33 was misinformed, or drew a wrong inference, as to the founding of the sanctuary at Bethel, he was probably right in regarding Bethel as a chief seat of calf worship, and indeed, since the story of Judges xviii makes it doubtful whether the image at Dan was a calf, *the* chief seat of that worship. On the other hand, while we know that at Dan a single guild of priests, viz. that instituted by Jonathan the grandson of Moses, ministered 'until the day of the captivity of the land', we have no trustworthy evidence as to the guild of priests at Bethel.

Seeing then that there is clear evidence of the worship of the golden calf at one sanctuary only, viz. Bethel, and no evidence as to the priesthood who ministered before it, while we have an ancient tradition of an Aaron who made a golden calf, is it too daring a conjecture that the originator of the cult of the golden calf at Bethel was in N. Israel believed to be Aaron, and that the sons of Aaron performed at Bethel the functions of the priesthood? Certainly if Dan and Bethel be sister sanctuaries, the priests of Bethel would naturally be regarded as in some sort brothers of the priests of Dan. And if the priesthood of Dan be derived from Moses, and the priesthood of Bethel from Aaron, we get a new light on Exod. iv 14, 'Is there not Aaron thy brother the Levite?'<sup>1</sup>

But here a difficulty arises. If the northern tradition honoured Aaron as the founder of the cult of the calf, and believed that he lived during the Exodus, how are we to account for the fact that the tradition of the Judges takes no account of his priesthood nor of the golden calf which he made? It is, however, unnecessary to point out that the greatest uncertainty prevailed as to the exact time when certain legendary or eponymous heroes had flourished, and legendary events had taken place. Thus, for example, Jair's colonization of eastern Manasseh is recorded in Num. xxxii 41 as occurring during the lifetime of Moses; but in Judges x 3-5 as later than the time of Abimelech. Similarly the name Hormah was given in the days of Moses according to Num. xxi 3, but according to Judges i 17 after the beginning of the conquest of western Palestine. Nor was this uncertainty confined to the very early period. A comparison of the summaries of the reigns of Saul and David shews that certain military achievements were assigned to the days of those two kings; but whether Saul was the hero in them, or David, appears to have been quite uncertain.

But assuming that the view set forth above is true, viz. that Aaron was originally the founder of the Bethelite priesthood, we have yet to enquire how it came about that the founder of a priesthood of a 'high place', and that a non-Judaeon one, came to be

<sup>1</sup> The probable connexion of Aaron with Bethel has been pointed out by others: see, for example, *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, art. 'Aaron'. The conclusion here set forth, however, has been arrived at quite independently.

regarded as the head and source of the only orthodox priesthood in Jerusalem? To answer this question it is necessary to review briefly the religious history of Palestine from the middle of the eighth century B. C. It must be remembered that the reformation under Josiah was not the outcome of a tendency that had suddenly arisen. Reforming ideas had been 'in the air', and gradually gaining force for more than a century. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and, in all probability, many another prophet had had visions of a worship offered to Jehovah neither at Jerusalem, nor in any other mountain, whether in Judaea or in Samaria, but manifested in righteousness and mercy. It is now generally recognized that prophetic activity was greater in N. Israel than in Judaea: and since no prophet was ever a mere *vox clamans in deserto* (for in that case his words would utterly have perished), it is a fair inference, notwithstanding the statements of the Book of Kings, that there were in the kingdom of Samaria at the time of its fall a considerable number of people, albeit a minority of the nation, who cherished the teaching of Amos and Hosea.

Nor must we go beyond the statements, whether of the Bible, or of the monuments, in imagining an almost complete depopulation of N. Israel. That the ranks of the fighting-men had been sorely thinned, that all the aristocracy and priests and many of the *bourgeois* class were transported, is probable enough from the later experience of Judah; but after subtracting all these it is evident that there must have remained a very considerable population, poor indeed, and with no strong political feeling (since they had always belonged to a class whose fate it had been to be governed rather than to govern), but not necessarily less religious, or less likely to be influenced by the teaching of the prophets than those who were carried into exile. We have the emphatic testimony of Jeremiah a century later that in Jerusalem the great men were as bad as the simple and poor. The narrative of 2 Kings xvii 24-41 implies the destruction of all the N. Israelite sanctuaries. This is no doubt an unintentional exaggeration, but it is certainly highly probable that the chief sanctuaries of Jehovah were destroyed. And since Bethel was the royal sanctuary of Israel, we may consider it certain that Bethel shared the fate of Samaria.

But doubtless there were left here and there, in out-of-the-way

places, altars of Jehovah which had been too poor to attract the vengeance of the Assyrians, where it was still possible for Jehovah's devout worshippers to render to Him the firstfruits of His ground. It would seem that from time to time during the first half of the seventh century B.C. various groups of colonists from other portions of the Assyrian empire were settled in the province of Samaria, notably on the site, or in the neighbourhood, of the ruined Bethel. Owing to the fact that much of the land had gone out of cultivation, wild beasts had increased to such an extent as to become a scourge to the inhabitants; and this trouble, naturally enough, was understood to be a sign of the wrath of the god of the district. The Jehovah worshippers represented the calamity as due to the wrath of their slighted God, Jehovah, and doubtless argued, as Haggai did in a somewhat parallel case, How could the land prosper when the temple of its Deity lay waste? The result was that a petition was addressed to the King of Assyria, ostensibly on behalf of the non-Israelite portion of the population, that facilities might be given them for learning the customary law of Jehovah, who was now recognized as the undisputed God of the land. Since these settlers could not be supposed to have any very strong national feeling, the petition was granted, and a priest was allowed to reside at Bethel. Whether this priest really was a member of the original guild of priests at Bethel, or not, it is impossible to say with certainty; but it is at least probable, and in any case continuity with the former priesthood would almost certainly be claimed for the restored priesthood.

It will thus be seen that in the seventh century B.C. the worship of Jehovah was maintained in the province of Samaria, and that at Bethel, the old royal sanctuary, a priesthood derived from the old stock ministered with the sanction, and presumably under the protection, of the Assyrian governor. Truly the promise to Elijah was fulfilled, Jehovah had left to serve Him seven thousand in Israel.

But meanwhile, if the worship of Jehovah was reasserting itself in Samaria, there seemed a danger of its being suppressed, at least as the prophets understood it, in Judah. Under Manasseh a strong reaction had set in against the reformers. The reactionary party strove relentlessly to exterminate their opponents,

and a persecution ensued, in which many were put to death. But if Manasseh determined that in his own kingdom he would have no new-fangled notions, such as were associated with the name of Isaiah, his jurisdiction extended but a very short distance northward from Jerusalem. An hour and a half's walk, or thereabouts, and the persecuted Judæan found himself beyond the reach of Manasseh's clutches, where under the *aegis* of Assyria he had freedom to worship God. When we remember the long reign of Manasseh, and the proximity of Bethel to Jerusalem, we cannot doubt that many worshippers of Jehovah fled to the former place for refuge, carrying with them their traditions of their Judæan forefathers, and of the mighty works which Jehovah had wrought in Judah in the time of old.

It is not, of course, necessary to suppose that the worship at Bethel was of a very high degree of spirituality. Men may be ready to face exile for their faith, and yet be far removed from the spirituality of a Jeremiah. But though the community at Bethel may not have contained a Jeremiah, it is in accordance with probability to suppose that it was at least animated by a desire to serve the Lord in a better way than of old; it was, to use a metaphor of Jeremiah's, ground cleared of thorns and ploughed, ground ready to receive the seed which should be sown in it.

If the supposition that persecuted Judæans found a refuge in Bethel be correct, we have an explanation of the comparative tenderness with which Jeremiah speaks of Samaria. Israel had shewn herself more righteous than Judah; for Judah had persecuted the saints, and Israel had offered them an asylum.

NOTE. It may, perhaps, appear to some that the possibility of an asylum for persecuted Judæans in Bethel is precluded by the story of Josiah's desecration of Bethel. It will doubtless be felt by some that, if Josiah was free to work his will on Bethel, Manasseh may have been able to do the same. But the whole story of Josiah's pollution of the altar at Bethel, as related in 2 Kings xxiii 15-20, is shewn to be a later addition by a comparison with ver. 8, which states that Josiah carried out his reforms from *Geba* to Beersheba. *Bethel* therefore lay outside Josiah's jurisdiction, and the story of its desecration, so far as it is historical, belongs to a later date.

But to return to Judah. In the eighteenth year of King

Josiah, when Jeremiah had preached in Jerusalem for five years, the reforming party in Judah again began to lift up their heads. Although it is probable that comparatively few were willing to go to the lengths to which the great prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and possibly Jeremiah, had gone, it was evident to all who were in the least imbued with their teaching that something must be done to reform sacrificial worship. The result was the well-known compromise embodied in the legislation of Deuteronomy, by which the local sanctuaries were abolished; the clergy who ministered at them being given the privilege of joining the community of the sons of Zadok at Jerusalem. Of the manner in which the reform was carried out we have no details. It certainly was not accomplished without friction: in particular, as we have already seen, the sons of Zadok resisted strenuously, and more or less successfully, the attempt to foist strangers upon their close corporation. With one party demanding a more radical reform, with another party ready to denounce the reformers as impious desecrators of Jehovah's sanctuaries, with a fierce quarrel raging between the clergy, the latter years of the kingdom of Judah must have been as troublous from the religious as from the political point of view.

At last peace came, but it was the peace of the stricken field. The menacing arm which had been so long stretched out against Judah descended in two fearful blows. The history of N. Israel repeated itself again in Judah. Jerusalem, and to a great extent all Judah, lost the flower of the population; king, aristocracy, nobles, merchants, and the better sort of artisans were swept away, the fortifications of Jerusalem were razed to the ground, and the sons of Zadok were left to enjoy as best they could in a foreign land their victory over the country Levites.

It is, however, a great mistake to suppose that the bulk of the population were carried off to Babylon. There must have been a considerable number of inhabitants left, or it would not have been worth while to appoint Gedaliah governor. And even when we have made allowance for those who were murdered at Mizpah, and for those who subsequently took refuge in Egypt, it is evident that there still remained in Judah a by no means inconsiderable body of inhabitants. Judah, though ruined and bereaved of many of the best of her sons, was still regarded as a

living state. Those who lived there were still considered Jehovah's people. In the stirring address of the great unknown prophet, the exiles in Babylon are bidden not to *take* comfort for that they themselves shall be restored to their ancestral home, but to *give* comfort to the poverty-stricken, distressed population of Judah and Jerusalem, because their help is near.

Assuming then, as we may, that a considerable, though sadly diminished population remained behind in Palestine, what inferences may be drawn as to their religious condition? That the bulk of this population, in name at all events, acknowledged Jehovah as the only God may be considered sufficiently proved from the absence of any attempt after the return from Babylon to set up the worship of any foreign deity. It was a population, moreover, which had been compelled some thirty-four years before to perform its official worship, i. e. worship which necessitated a priest, at one sanctuary only, viz. that of Jerusalem. No doubt much that was heathenish went on notwithstanding the law of the one sanctuary; but, for the matter of that, sacrifices to earth gods, and like superstitions, lingered on in out-of-the-way districts in England even within living memory. Deprived then of their priests or Levites, with the sole sanctuary which the reformation of Josiah had spared lying in ruins, those who remained behind in Palestine were, as to religious observances, in much the same case as those who had been transported to Babylon. They were indeed, to use Wellhausen's words of the exiles, 'living under a sort of vast interdict': with this difference, however, that whereas the community of Jews in Babylon had with them a priesthood, but a priesthood that could do nothing, or next to nothing, apart from a sanctuary, those that remained behind had the holy site, and needed but a priesthood to resume the religious life of the last thirty-four years.

In these days, when the distinction between sacred and secular is so strongly marked, we are perhaps apt to forget that in a more primitive state of religion there is no such distinction, but the welfare or ill-success of a man depends upon the due observance of certain religious rites. One thing is certain; every man, whether good or bad as judged by prophetic standards, was convinced of the desirability, and indeed the necessity, of having a priesthood. Now no one willingly consents to go without

what he considers necessary, or even highly desirable, and in such a case, if the supply is possible, the demand is pretty sure to produce it. If Jerusalem had been deprived of its priests, there flourished a body of priests at Bethel, only ten miles off. And to the inhabitants of the country districts of Judah, whose Levites had by the enactment of Josiah been given the same *status* as the sons of Zadok, these priests would appear as good as those whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried off. Rigid views of Aaronite, or Zadokite, or any other succession did not yet exist. Nothing would therefore be more natural than that the thoughts of those who missed the priests of Jerusalem should be directed to the priests of Bethel. And since in all probability there was a steady influx of people into Jerusalem when the first panic was over, so that the population there was at least equal to that of Bethel, the invitation may well have been given to the priests at Bethel to forsake their sanctuary in that place and to migrate to Jerusalem. There must have been many who remembered the invitation which Jeremiah had cried to the north to the back-sliding children of N. Israel to return to Jehovah. The time had come for mutual help by mutual compromise. It must not be forgotten that the law of a single sanctuary had, to a great extent been imposed upon N. Israel by the consequences of the Assyrian conquest, and therefore the great obstacle to the religious union of the two provinces had already been removed.

NOTE. It may perhaps appear that due weight has not been given to the statement of Jer. xli 5, that 'there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with oblations and frankincense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the Lord'. It is certainly not a fair inference from this statement that Shechem, Shilo and Samaria already recognized Jerusalem as the religious metropolis; for it would seem that these men were Jewish refugees, not natives of the northern province. This at least is the natural inference from the statement that 'ten men were found among them, that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have stores hidden in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey'. Even if Ishmael had been willing to go as far as Shiloh for forage, it is extremely improbable that he would have gone to Shechem or Samaria; nor is it obvious why the natives of these places should have hidden their stores in the field.

On the assumption therefore that the priests of Bethel became the priests of Jerusalem, it will be seen that the law of the one sanctuary became the law, not only of Judah and Benjamin, but also of a considerable district besides. We need not, however, suppose that the whole province of Samaria was at once united for religious purposes with Judah. The curious appendix to the Deuteronomic law in Deut. xxvii, which enjoins the erection of an altar on Mount Ebal and the plastering over of certain great stones, that the words of the law may be inscribed upon them, looks very much like a compromise arrived at with the natives of Shechem, when they also agreed to recognize Jerusalem as the one legitimate sanctuary. In this way the reputation which Shechem had possessed from time immemorial would be fully respected without detriment to the temple at Jerusalem. In such a compromise the priests who had formerly ministered at the sanctuary on Ebal, would probably be incorporated with the sons of Aaron at Jerusalem in accordance with the provision of Deut. xviii 6-8. The right of sanctuary which, of course, Shechem had enjoyed in the past was preserved to it. It is extremely probable that a compromise similar to that which was made with Shechem was subsequently made with the inhabitants of Gilead. The story contained in Joshua xxii, of the great altar which the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had built 'in the region about Jordan', though scarcely historical in its present form, probably rests on a foundation of fact. An altar is a strange erection if it is only to be used as a monument. If, however, an altar actually existed, and the religious sensibilities of those who had worshipped there were shocked by the proposal to demolish it, a compromise may well have been arrived at, by which the altar itself was preserved but devoted henceforth to a new purpose.

On the hypothesis elaborated above, it seems possible to explain what must certainly be admitted as a most remarkable fact, that, for some reason or other, the province of Samaria accepted the Book of Deuteronomy before the return from captivity. Whether the statements of the Book of Ezra are strictly historical or not, one thing is absolutely certain; unless Samaria had received Deuteronomy, the whole story of the quarrel between the Jews and the Samaritans is unintelligible. It is inconceivable that the

people of Samaria should voluntarily have taken upon themselves the burden of the whole law, if they had not been first prepared for it by the acceptance of Deuteronomy.

NOTE. Such a compromise as that set forth above would certainly not be effected without a very considerable amount of opposition. It is probable that the author of 2 Kings xviii 22 is putting into the mouth of Rabshakeh the gist of the protests which were still being made in his own day by the discontented section of the population in Samaria. The causes of the opposition which Nehemiah encountered are never clearly set forth. In all likelihood, however, there were not wanting in Jerusalem in the days of Zerubbabel those who aimed at making Jerusalem the civil, as well as the religious, metropolis of all Palestine, in defiance of the strong national sentiment still existing in many of the inhabitants of the province of Samaria. The words of Neh. ii 10 are perfectly natural in the mouth of a man who is convinced of the superiority of the government of his own party, and imagines that all right-minded men must be convinced of it also.

On the assumption, then, that the above hypothesis is tenable, at what point in the list of high priests are we to place the introduction of the line of Aaron? In 1 Chron. vi 13-15 the genealogy of Jehozadak, the father of Joshua the high priest in the days of Zerubbabel, is given as follows: 'and Shallum begat Hilkiah, and Hilkiah begat Azariah; and Azariah begat Seraiah, and Seraiah begat Jehozadak; and Jehozadak went *into captivity*, when the Lord carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar': Joshua being thus directly connected with the pre-exilic Jerusalem priesthood of Zadok. But this genealogy is so obvious an inference to any one who starts with the Chronicler's assumption of the antiquity of the Pentateuch, and of a succession of high priests in accordance with its requirements, that it is quite unnecessary to suppose that the Chronicler found it in any ancient document. For Haggai makes it plain that Joshua was the son of Jehozadak; and 2 Kings xxv 18 (cf. Jer. lii 24) states that the name of the chief priest who ministered under Zedekiah, and was put to death by Nebuchadnezzar, was Seraiah. Since Seraiah had been chief priest up to the year 587 B.C. and the Chronicler believed Joshua to have become chief priest in the first year of Cyrus, it was natural to conclude (since there was room for but one generation

between the two) that Jehozadak, the father of Joshua, was the son of Seraiah. But since, according to the above theory, Joshua may be regarded as an Aaronite, not a Zadokite, his father Jehozadak must be an Aaronite also, the Chronicler having at this point grafted the Aaronite branch on to the Zadokite stock.

NOTE. No apology is needed for treating the priestly genealogies in Chronicles as unhistorical artificialities: see, for example, *Encyc. Bibl.* art. 'Genealogies'.

Whether Joshua, or Jehozadak, or the father of Joshua, was the first Aaronite priest to minister at Jerusalem cannot be determined with certainty; it is, however, probable that Joshua was not the first of his line, and that he owes his prominence to the peculiar circumstances of his priesthood. Opinion is still by no means unanimous as to the amount of weight which is to be assigned to the account given in Chronicles—Ezra—Nehemiah of the return under Zerubbabel; and it is impossible adequately to discuss the matter here. As, however, the whole theory now set forth assumes that it is unhistorical, the present writer must briefly state his main reason for so regarding it, which is the intense difficulty, if not the impossibility, of reconciling it with the statements of the contemporary prophets Haggai and Zechariah. For not only do these prophets refer the desolate condition of the sanctuary entirely to the selfishness and slackness of the community, and say nothing of any opposition from outside, but they absolutely ignore the wonderful fulfilment of prophecy, if such a fulfilment really had come to pass, of the first year of Cyrus. Nor can this difficulty be lightly brushed aside on the ground that Haggai and Zechariah do not mention the Return because they, in common with those to whom they preached, had taken part in it. Which of us that is a preacher, in exhorting a congregation to trust God's grace for the future, would ignore a notable manifestation of that grace given to them and to himself some sixteen years before? Of what use would it be to affirm that God's power still will lead us on, unless we acknowledge that it has blest us hitherto? But given a belief in the literal fulfilment of prophecy, and in the historical accuracy of Scripture, such as the Chronicler probably held, and such as most adult Christians were probably trained in as children, can we wonder at the Chronicler's inference that, since the book of

Isaiah names Cyrus as deliverer, therefore Cyrus must have been the deliverer? And what idea of a deliverance could the Chronicler have had, other than of a return from captivity? And if he should have known something (as he well may have done) about the decree of Cyrus authorizing the restoration of the gods to their shrines, how natural an inference to one in the Chronicler's circumstances to conclude that the zeal of Cyrus really was directed to the restoration of Jehovah's house at Jerusalem!

Not that we must necessarily go to the other extreme and suppose that no one came to Judah from Babylon in the time of Cyrus. The various officials who were appointed to the government of the province of Judah may have brought with them as interpreters and the like a certain number of men of Jewish birth, while it is also probable that some priests returned with Zerubbabel: and in this way the exiles in Babylon would be to some extent kept in touch with Palestine. But passing over the reign of Cyrus, of which we have no definite information, and not stopping to discuss the much vexed question of the identity of Sheshbazzar, we emerge into clearer light with the reign of Darius, and the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah. Now the fact that after a long interval of silence two prophets begin to prophesy simultaneously is a pretty sure indication of the recent occurrence of some very striking event in the political world. And when we consider the glowing hopes which Zechariah associates with Zerubbabel, it is difficult to resist the conviction that it was the appointment of Zerubbabel, the first governor of the old royal stock since the destruction of Jerusalem, which so kindled the fire of the prophet's aspirations. Zechariah anticipates that Zerubbabel will be a king upon his throne (Wellhausen's restoration of the text of Zech. vi 9-15 is here followed), and that following upon his coronation 'they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord'; in other words the restoration of Zerubbabel is an earnest of a much greater restoration of exiles still to come. Only Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the people of the land must recognize the paramount sovereignty of Jehovah. His house is far more important than any house of Zerubbabel's; if that be built, He will complete the work which He has begun.

But what can we learn from Haggai and Zechariah about

Joshua the son of Jehozadak? In the Book of Haggai he is simply mentioned with Zerubbabel; and we can draw no inferences as to his personality. In the Book of Zechariah, however, we learn two very significant facts about him. In the prophet's vision in chapter iii Joshua is presented to us as upon his trial before the angel of the Lord, the Satan standing upon his right hand to be his adversary. To have the Satan standing at one's right hand means, as Wellhausen says, to be visited with some misfortune. It is true that Zechariah does not state the nature of this misfortune; but the very remarkable language which he uses in chap. vi 9-15 may possibly furnish a clue both to the nature of Joshua's trial, and the prophet's reticence about it. Again it must be remembered that Wellhausen's restoration of the text is here followed, according to which only one crown is made, which is placed upon the head of Zerubbabel; after which the prophet proceeds as follows: *'Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Sprout; and he shall sprout forth out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord . . . and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit, and rule upon his throne; and Joshua shall be a priest at his right hand: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'* In this emphatic assertion of Joshua's position as priest at Zerubbabel's right hand, and in the significant addition that the counsel of peace shall be between them both, may we not read between the lines that the counsel of peace had not always been between Zerubbabel and Joshua? that the position of Joshua had not been hitherto altogether assured, and that an attempt had been made by Zerubbabel and his party to oust Joshua from his position? It would be almost inevitable that Zerubbabel, having been brought up in a country where the influence of the sons of Zadok was paramount, should look with suspicion on any other priestly guild. However, if this is the true explanation of the jealousy between Zerubbabel and Joshua, the prophetic party in Palestine, while recognizing the former as head of the community, would not tolerate any deposition of Joshua from the priesthood, and such of the sons of Zadok as had returned with Zerubbabel were compelled to accept him as their head. If, therefore, as seems likely, Zerubbabel was not strong enough to carry his point against the opposition of the population of Judah, the result

would be the ultimate strengthening of Joshua's position; since he would have been recognized not only by the Palestinian remnant, but also by one who was regarded by the exiles in Babylon as their accredited chief. And when the news was carried to Babylon, as it soon would be, that the sons of Aaron had been recognized as legitimate priests by Zerubbabel himself, and that henceforth there would be no room for the sons of Zadok, except they should consent to be merged in the guild of Aaron, the title 'sons of Aaron' would in the phraseology of the Jewish lawyers in Babylon take the place of the title 'sons of Zadok', and Aaron would be associated with Moses in a brotherhood that should endure for ever<sup>1</sup>.

But the objection will doubtless be made that this assumption leaves unexplained the fact that, notwithstanding the postulated supplanting of the sons of Zadok by the sons of Aaron, the former ultimately prevailed; for in the New Testament the high priest and his party belong to the sect of the Sadducees. However, if, as seems probable, the Sadducees are the same as the sons of Zadok, it is by no means difficult to account for their coming into prominence again. Whatever views be held of the return under Zerubbabel, there can be little doubt that Ezra was accompanied by a considerable following, which consisted in great measure of priests. These who, though from a legal point of view they were sons of Aaron, were also of course sons of Zadok, were very probably more numerous than the priests actually ministering at Jerusalem; and it is reasonable to suppose that they would be superior to the latter in education. Friction would almost inevitably ensue between these newcomers and the priests whom they found in possession; and considering the temper of Ezra and Nehemiah, such friction would be not unlikely to result in an open quarrel. There was no Zechariah to recommend that the counsel of peace should be between the two factions. And thus once more the old tribal jealousy would break out in absolute schism, and the more independent spirits would return to the spot which their fathers

<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah mentions *Levites* as present at Jerusalem on the occasion of his first visit, and as building some of the city wall. It is not, however, clear whether the distinction between Levites and priests was already recognized in Jerusalem, or due to Nehemiah himself. Neh. vii 1 makes the latter explanation possible.

had accounted holy, founding there a sect of dissenters that has continued to this day<sup>1</sup>.

In any attempt to reconstruct history from the fragmentary materials of the Old Testament, there is of necessity great room for subjectivity; and from the very nature of the case proof, such as the mathematician demands, is impossible. But as the anatomist, who from a few scattered bones reconstructs a whole skeleton—always provided that such a skeleton is in accordance with the ascertained facts of comparative anatomy—may be considered to have given a correct restoration of the original skeleton, until some other bone be found which will not fit into it; so a theory, which gathers into a whole the ascertained facts of criticism, may, in the absence of any proof to the contrary, be considered as giving in the main a correct view of history.

And it may be further claimed for this theory that it not only offers a solution of the problems with which it more directly deals, it also supplies a perfectly natural explanation of the composition of the Pentateuch. It is impossible here to give more than the most meagre outline; but such an outline will probably be enough to answer an objection which will present itself to many people. Since it is generally considered that the Book of Deuteronomy rests upon the united composition *JE*, and Deuteronomy is usually regarded as pre-exilic, a theory which assigns to the exile the compilation of *JE* may be thought to be wrecked on this rock. In the first place then, is it in any way necessary

<sup>1</sup> It is by no means improbable that a breach between the Samaritans and Judah had occurred before the time of Nehemiah. The lamentable condition of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah seems scarcely explicable, except on the assumption that some disaster had occurred subsequent to the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah. If, as seems probable, the glowing hopes which the latter prophet had expressed for Zerubbabel had awakened an expectation of the revival of the Davidic monarchy, the inhabitants of Samaria may have resented the claim of the house of David to lord it over all Palestine, and may themselves have attacked Jerusalem; or, by representing it as guilty of treason to the Persian government, they may have induced the King of Persia to intervene. It is at least remarkable that in a number of passages which may reasonably be assigned to the period between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah (e. g. 2 Sam. vii, Ps. xviii, &c.) we find bright hopes expressed for the dynasty of David, hopes which seem to go beyond the language of Zechariah. About the same time we have Psalms which speak of the godly as oppressed by wicked men who seem at all events to pose as Israelites (cf. also 1 Sam. ii 9). But such a struggle, if it took place, would be due rather to political than to religious jealousy.

to suppose that Deuteronomy is pre-exilic? It has often been supposed that it was the possession of this book which made it possible for the Jewish exiles to preserve their religion in Babylon. But it is surely a most remarkable fact that the man who of all others might be expected to have drunk in the teaching of Deuteronomy shews no acquaintance with it. This has reference to the Book of Deuteronomy, not to the law enshrined in it.

Ezekiel was a priest of that sanctuary which owed its unique position to the Deuteronomic law; he was engaged in combating the very superstitions against which the Book of Deuteronomy contains such solemn warnings; and yet he never backs up his own words by an appeal to the one book which on the common theory was considered authoritative scripture, nor is there any indication that his language was in any way influenced by its remarkable phraseology. This is a matter which deserves fuller treatment, but space forbids.

Probably, however, it will still be objected that in whatever way the diversity of Ezekiel and Deuteronomy be explained, there is no explaining away the testimony of the Book of Jeremiah; the common view being that Jeremiah shews the influence of Deuteronomy on every page. But without stopping to enquire whether the Book of Jeremiah or the Book of Deuteronomy is the earlier, it must be insisted upon that the Book of Jeremiah as it stands cannot be appealed to as consisting of the *ipsissima verba* of Jeremiah. In the words of so sober a critic as Dr A. B. Davidson: 'The literary style of Jeremiah can scarcely be spoken of, because, strictly speaking, we have no literature from him. The narrative pieces in the book are not from his own hand; and even when fragments of his speeches are reported in these narratives, they have in many cases passed through the narrator's mind, and may have been somewhat modified. The presence of some or many characteristic phrases of Jeremiah in the reports is not proof of their literal fidelity. And in any case such reports are mere compends, in regard to which the question of style can hardly be raised. The only parts of the book on which a judgement in respect of style can be formed are the chapters dictated to Baruch, chapters i-xvii, and any other passages which appear to come directly from Jeremiah's own hand. Even the dictated

passages are mere outlines and skeletons ; the prophet's object was to preserve and present to others, the matter, the religious contents of his oracles—he was little solicitous about the form. No doubt something of Jeremiah's literary manner will be reflected in these fragments, but they represent very inadequately what he was capable of as a writer.'

But though we may not have the *ipsissima verba* of any complete discourse, it can surely hardly be doubted that isolated sayings have come down to us with substantial accuracy. And if this be granted, we can surely form some estimate of the prophet's language. When we consider Jeremiah's phrases which, as Dr Davidson says, 'haunt the ear', when we take into account the exquisite elegies enshrined in the book which bears his name, as well as the outpourings of his personal religion, can we refuse to recognize that he was not only a prophet, but also a poet—a poet down to his finger-tips. Jeremiah is no mere stringer together of devotional tags, but an original thinker: and if this be recognized, there will be little difficulty in deciding, not that Jeremiah quotes Deuteronomy, but that the phrases of Deuteronomy are due to the permanent impression which Jeremiah left on the religious language of his people. Space forbids an elaboration of this contention ; but the present writer cannot refrain from stating that a careful comparison of Jeremiah with Deuteronomy, undertaken with reference to this very question, has only strengthened his conviction<sup>1</sup>.

If, however, Jeremiah is not influenced by Deuteronomy but *vice versa*, there is no need to date the composition of the latter book before the exile, and we find ourselves in a position to form some idea of the way in which the various documents of the Pentateuch were put together. The age of Jeremiah was apparently the age of law-writing, just as the age of St Luke was the age of gospel-writing. And the parallel probably holds good also in respect of the subject-matter. Just as 'many took in hand to draw up narratives' which in all probability the Church could not have accepted, so, doubtless, many took in hand to draw up law-books, setting forth each one his own

<sup>1</sup> The wording of Deuteronomy xviii 6, 'from any of thy gates out of all Israel', is much more natural, if for purposes of worship Judah and Samaria had been amalgamated, than if the law of Deuteronomy was intended for Judah only.

particular ideas. May it not be of some such unauthorized law-books that Jeremiah declares that the deceitful pen of scribes has been busy in deceit? (Jer. viii 8.)

It is not improbable that the code of  $\mathcal{F}$  represents an early effort of the reforming party to formulate a law for Judah; and the persecution of the reformers and their flight into N. Israel, which we have seen to be probable, may not improbably have given the impetus to a similar movement in the latter country. It is by no means certain that Deuteronomy or any portion of it was the book which was found in the temple and read before Josiah. It may have been the code of  $\mathcal{F}$ . For the reform when once begun may well have gone beyond the law which gave to it its original impetus. It may, however, have been a prophetic work, e.g. Micah. The whole account of Josiah's reforms, although not all of one date, is probably all later than the Book of Deuteronomy which has coloured the language throughout. In all likelihood the code of Deuteronomy merely crystallizes and gives a permanent legal form to the reforms which Josiah had already inaugurated.

At the religious union of Judah and Samaria, which certainly took place during the exile, and which has been assigned above to a migration of the sons of Aaron from Bethel to Jerusalem, a difficulty would arise that each province had its own law-book; the code of  $\mathcal{F}$  being authoritative in Judah,  $\mathcal{E}$  in Samaria. In such a case we may be pretty certain that neither province would consent to give up its own law-book, and adopt that of the other, and a compromise would be necessary. Such a compromise we not improbably have in the combined work of  $\mathcal{F}\mathcal{E}$ .

But since the writing of the component parts of  $\mathcal{F}\mathcal{E}$  a great change had come about in religious feeling. Jeremiah's teaching, little as the prophet himself suspected it, had been slowly producing its effect on religious thought. The leaven of his doctrine had been hidden in many measures of superstition, but now the whole lump was leavened. The result would be a desire for something more prophetic, more spiritual than the mere dry bones of a code of laws. To such a desire Deuteronomy would seem to owe its origin. It formulates the law indeed, but by dwelling on Jehovah's goodness as the chief motive of obedience to the law, it seeks to change the law into a gospel.

Whether any of Deuteronomy was written before the Exile, or whether the book itself with its successive prefaces and additions is entirely an exilic production, cannot perhaps be determined with certainty. The term exilic must of course be understood of the date, not of the locality. That Deuteronomy is a Palestinian work is sufficiently proved not only by internal evidence, but also by the fact that it has had no influence on the language of Ezekiel.

The Palestinian community would therefore possess two canonical law-books, the one, *JE*, holding a position not unlike that of St Mark's Gospel among the four Gospels, the other, Deuteronomy, roughly corresponding to St Matthew's Gospel. It remains to be shewn how these two books came to be combined with the rest of the Pentateuch.

While the development of the law just described was going on in the west, the Jewish Church in Babylon was also engaged in setting in order the priestly traditions of the sons of Zadok. The originator of this movement would seem to be the prophet Ezekiel, who, however, did not confine himself to merely recording primitive usage, but freely introduced alterations when it seemed advisable to do so. Ezekiel's initiative appears to have been followed by others, who worked out the laws of Israel in relation to the traditions of the ancestry of Israel; probably enlarging, and to some extent correcting, the legends by the help of the parallel Babylonian stories. The redactor or redactors of this priestly tradition would seem to have been in ignorance of the Palestinian books *JE* and Deuteronomy; or at any rate, if a copy had reached Babylon, it appears not to have been considered canonical. The result was that each division of the Jewish people had its own law; the western what may be described as a prophetic, the eastern a priestly law.

It is related of Ezra that he came to Jerusalem, having 'set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgements'. But in carrying out this intention he would find a very serious obstacle in the fact that those to whom his mission was directed were in possession of a law differing in many important particulars from that in which he himself was so well versed. It would have been impossible to induce them to give up their own law, even if Ezra had desired

to do so; and we may be sure that he had no thought of giving up his own. But since it was absolutely necessary that the Church of Israel should have but one authoritative law, if it were not to be permanently split into two factions, a compromise was resorted to similar to that which had resulted in the book *ŸE*. The priestly law of Babylon was combined with the law of the Palestinian community. This law, published as it was in Jerusalem, by the accredited representatives of the Church of the eastern dispersion, was universally accepted as the law of the Jewish race; and when we consider the enormous influence it has had in separating Israel from the pollutions of the heathen, we may surely recognize in its complicated history the working out of God's eternal purpose. The law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, so that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good.

R. H. KENNETT.