

THE HEART OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT
JOHN R. SAMPSON

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JOHN R. SAMPEY, D.D., LL.D.

THE HEART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A Manual for Christian Students

BY

JOHN R. SAMPEY, D.D., LL.D.

PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION IN THE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

*Author of "Syllabus for Old Testament Study," "The
International Lesson System," "The Ethical Teaching
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THE HEART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. II

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO THE MEMORY OF
BASIL MANLY, JR.
MY HONORED PRECEPTOR AND FRIEND

PREFACE

“WHERE can I find an Old Testament manual written by a modern scholar who believes thoroughly in the supernatural in both Testaments?” You hold the answer in your hands. It is not an Old Testament History, though it follows the thread of the story from beginning to end; it is not a book on Old Testament Literature, though it opens up the poetical and prophetic books to the student; it is not a treatise on Old Testament Theology, though it calls attention to the rise and development of the great doctrines of the Hebrew Scriptures. The author has not limited himself to biography and history, nor to literary analysis and appreciation, nor to the growth of Bible doctrines; but he has freely drawn from these and other departments of Old Testament study whatever seemed of most value to young people in Christian homes and schools in the twentieth century. His aim is to call attention to what is most worth while.

It may seem impossible to make a book that will be suitable for popular Bible study, and at the same time be adapted to use in high schools, colleges, and seminaries; but the attempt is here made. It is hoped that the book is not too difficult for the average reader, nor too elementary for students in schools and colleges.

The gist of the Old Testament revelation is here put before the student in thirteen chapters. A closing chapter presents a bird's-eye view of the Bible as a whole. A chart is appended in which an effort is made to suggest reasonable dates for the books of the Bible.

The wise teacher will take several recitations for some of the chapters. He will try to persuade the pupil to read

the Bible references in full, that he may get his own first-hand impressions of the meaning of God's Word. If this Manual creates a thirst for richer knowledge of the Old Testament, and starts the reader aright as he opens the Bible, the author's aim will have been attained.

The favor with which the first edition was received leads the author to hope for continued usefulness for this new and revised edition. More than seventeen thousand copies of the first edition were sold. *The Heart of the Old Testament* has also been translated into Portuguese and into Chinese.

INTRODUCTORY

THE Old Testament is part of a progressive revelation. God spoke in ancient times to the fathers through the prophets in many pieces and in many styles; in the fullness of time He spoke to us through His Son (Heb. 1:1, 2). The revelation of grace and redemption, begun in the earliest history of mankind, and continued through the patriarchs and the prophets, was completed in Christ Jesus and the Apostles.

The Bible is a unity; for in all its parts it is a history of redemption. That redemption was achieved by Jesus Christ, the central character of the Bible, for whom the Old Testament prepared the way. To Him all the prophets bore witness. Well do Christians retain the Old Testament in their Bibles; for the earlier stages of the redemptive process are therein described. The germs of all the great Christian doctrines are found in the Hebrew Scriptures. They are still "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). These sacred writings are still able to make one wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15).

What folly to ignore writings of such mighty power! But there is a folly possibly greater even than neglect of these books: some Christian scholars interpret the Old Testament in the spirit of the unbelieving Jews, studiously explaining away all the types and prophecies that point forward to our Lord Jesus Christ. Let it be our aim in these studies to focus our attention on those facts

and doctrines in the Old Testament that most concern us as Christian students. While all parts of the sacred writings are worthy of careful and frequent reading, some sections have a richer message for the modern Christian than others. It is our hope that these studies will give us many glimpses into the *heart of the Old Testament*, to the end that we may thereby get a more glorious vision of the *heart of God*.

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THE HEART OF
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CONCERNING THE SCRIPTURES

1. THEIR ORIGIN AS VIEWED BY PETER

We have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation.

For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

2. THEIR CHARACTER AND VALUE AS VIEWED BY PAUL

Abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

THE HEART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Chapter I

THE BEGINNINGS

1. GOD THE CREATOR

THE first verse of Genesis lies at the foundation of all the theology of the Bible. Dr. James P. Boyce had a great sermon on the first part of the verse—"In the beginning God." Back of all things, before all things, above all things stands God the great First Cause, the Creator.

A hearty acceptance of the fact that God actually created the heavens and the earth without the use of pre-existing materials, would lift one above the malaria of most modern heresies. He who begins the study of religion with this simple truth lays a solid foundation for all his future thinking. Murphy does not overstate the significance of these opening words of the Bible when he remarks: "This first verse denies atheism; for it assumes the being of God. It denies polytheism, and, among its various forms, the doctrine of two eternal principles, the one good and the other evil; for it confesses the one Eternal Creator. It denies materialism; for it asserts the creation of matter. It denies pantheism; for it assumes the existence of God before all things, and apart from them. It denies fatalism, for it involves the freedom of the Eternal Being." Hold fast

always to the fundamental fact that the universe came into existence through the creative action of God. Matter is not eternal; God alone is from everlasting to everlasting. God is not confined within the universe; He is *over* all as well as *in* all. Much of the false philosophy of our time would fade away, if this truth were universally accepted.

2. THE ORDER OF CREATION

The universe was not complete and perfect in all its parts, when God first created it. We are expressly told that the earth, the planet in which our chief interest lies, was a desolation and a waste. But for the brooding of the Spirit of God over the waters, the earth might have remained waste and void (Gen. 1:2). The creative activity of God continued. He spoke and light came into existence. Step by step He prepared the world for the coming of man.

It is interesting to note the general correspondence between Genesis and modern science in the order of creation. In both accounts there is progress from the lower forms of life to the higher, the series reaching its climax in the appearance of man on the earth. Those who are disturbed by minor discrepancies between the theories of scientists and the statements in Genesis should not overlook the fact that the author of Genesis did not seek after scientific precision. He uses the language of appearance and of every-day life. Had he used scientific terminology, the religious purpose of the narrative might have been obscured. Let the astronomer and the geologist and the biologist pursue their researches with perfect freedom. We must not forget the wise saying of Cardinal Baronius: "The intention of Holy Scripture is to teach us how to go to heaven, and not how the heavens go."

Many of the best modern scientists have marveled at

the wonderful insight of the author of Genesis. Nothing short of supernatural guidance will account for the width and the accuracy of his knowledge in that early time. And yet we must not make the mistake of assuming that the first chapter of Genesis is a scientific treatise. It is rather a great religious poem celebrating the glory of God as the Creator of all things. We should study Genesis as a *religious* book, if we would get the knowledge and uplift it was intended to impart.

Many Christian students now recognize the six days of creative activity as standing for periods of indefinite length. The universe is possibly millions of years old. The earth, on which we live, is probably much older than we ever imagined it was in our childhood. God takes time to accomplish His work. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. God is not in a hurry. Just as the seventh day of rest from creation seems, according to Genesis, to stretch all the way from the creation of man to the present time, so the preceding days of creative activity were almost certainly long periods. In the language of the Bible the word *day* often refers to a period of indefinite length.

3. CREATION OF MAN

Finally, after long preparation, the earth was ready to receive its chief tenant. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26). Why does God use the plural, saying, "Let *us* make man in *our* image?" With whom is he taking counsel? Of the many answers to this question we name only three: (1) Delitzsch thinks the words are addressed to the angels, as belonging to a higher order

of spiritual beings. (2) Others suggest that God is speaking to Himself, using the royal style of earthly princes. (3) Still others think that there is a suggestion of a plurality of persons in the Godhead, a foreshadowing of the doctrine of the Trinity, which was afterward to be more fully revealed. The last view is to be preferred. Verse 27 tells us that God created man in His own image.

What is meant by the image and the likeness of God? Dr. Welton, in his Commentary on Genesis, well says: "The image of God in which man was created did not consist in his erect form or features, nor solely in his intellect, nor yet in his immortality—for he has not like God a past as well as a future eternity of being; but rather in the moral dispositions of his soul, in those qualities of mind and heart which constitute him a subject of God's law, capable of knowing God and holding fellowship with him. The rational, moral, and spiritual nature of man are all included in the image of God."

When God created man, a male and a female created He them (Gen. 1:27). In the general account of creation in Genesis 1:1 to 2:3, the story of the creation of man is told very briefly; in the supplementary account in Genesis 2:4-25, the story is related with many suggestive details. But even in the briefer account it is made plain that God made man and woman and united them in holy wedlock. Marriage, with the birth of children, was in God's plan for the race prior to the temptation and the fall. Marriage and the growth of the family through the birth of children are relics of man's original inheritance, when he enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God (Gen. 1:28).

4. THE SABBATH

At length God rested from His creative activity. He was not wearied; but He could now contemplate with

satisfaction a completed universe. His work of preserving and renewing the world goes on still.

God gave the sabbath to man as a great blessing. "The sabbath was made for man," as a reminder of his kinship to God. Six days man is to labor and do all his work, and on the seventh, like God at the close of creation, he is to cease from his regular work (Gen. 2: 1-3). The sabbath is the best day of all the week, when spent in rest from toil and in deeds of charity and mercy. Dr. Welton puts the matter properly when he says: "As God rested on the seventh day from his work of *creating*, while yet he continued and continues to work in the kingdom of his providence and grace, so man, in imitation of his example, must abstain on that day from his secular occupations, and concern himself with sacred and eternal things."

The Old Testament in many places puts great honor upon the sabbath, and pronounces blessings upon those who observe it properly (Ex. 20: 8-11; Isaiah 58: 13, 14; Jeremiah 17: 19-27). As Christians, we are not under the strict ceremonial laws of the Mosaic system as to the sabbath. Our Lord, while observing the sabbath as God originally meant it to be observed by His chosen nation, refused to be bound by the burdensome traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. And Paul proclaims the freedom of believers from the burdensome requirements of the ceremonial law (Rom. 14: 5, 6; Gal. 4: 8-11; Col. 2: 16, 17). In the Lord's Day we have the best elements of the Jewish sabbath, with none of its onerous restrictions.

5. THE FIRST HOME

Genesis 2: 4-25 gives a charming account of man's first home. There has been much speculation as to the site of Eden. The most probable location is in lower Babylonia near the head of the Persian Gulf. Jehovah

God prepared a delightful home for Adam, and placed him in the midst of a beautiful garden rich in earth's choicest fruits. He gave him blessed employment, free from anxiety and toil, in caring for the garden.

At first man was alone, having no human associate and helper. Birds and beasts and all the living creatures of earth could not bring him satisfaction. God is pictured as noting man's incompleteness and lack of perfect happiness apart from woman. Now follows the charming story of the forming of woman from the side of man. Call it an allegory or parable, if you will, but do not fail to get the great lessons God would teach by this story. Observe, as a hint of the proper relation between husband and wife, that she was "not made out of his head to rule over him; nor out of his feet to be trampled on by him; but out of his side, to be equal with him; under his arm to be protected; and near his heart to be beloved." When God made woman He made her to be man's helper and companion. "I will make him a help as his counterpart," said God. What nobler mission could woman desire than this? Many wives and mothers have found it a work of joy to be helpers and companions to their husbands and sons.

God's thought about marriage is the union of one man and one woman in perpetual wedlock. He makes no provision for polygamy or divorce (Gen. 2:18-24).

6. THE TEMPTATION AND THE FALL

Adam and Eve were happy and innocent at first in the beautiful home provided for them by the loving God. They had useful employment, without the weariness and pain that attend upon toil. God is a worker; and He gave man work to do even in the garden of Eden. Energetic natures look forward with joy to active service in the life beyond. The servants of the King will ever serve Him.

We now approach a great mystery—the entrance of sin into man's heart and life. The story in Genesis, intelligible to little children by its simplicity and naturalness, has kindled the admiration of many of the profoundest philosophers. No other account of the entrance of sin into the human race will ever displace this wonderful story; and we do well to let it make its impress on our minds, by reading it over and over again. A score of questions arise that we may not be able to answer to our own satisfaction; but we shall not go astray on the fundamentals, if we let the author of Genesis be our guide.

If our first parents were to be confirmed in innocence and goodness, they must have moral education. They must be left free to choose between obedience to God's requirements and disobedience; and God's requirements were not burdensome. We must not imagine that God wished to keep them in ignorance of anything good and helpful. From the experimental knowledge of evil God wished to restrain them; and such a limitation was thoroughly reasonable and beneficent. Experimental knowledge of evil brought with it an evil conscience, and so they were ashamed in the presence of one another and frightened at the approach of God. Such knowledge was not a blessing, but a curse.

The first temptation came from without. The tempter appeared as a serpent, insidious and artful. He raised the question whether God is not unkind and arbitrary in withholding from His creatures the right to use the good things by which they are surrounded. When he succeeds in winning a hearing, he boldly accuses God of falsehood, and intimates that God is jealous of His creatures, lest they rise to His own plane of knowledge. The tempter thus injects a terrible doubt into the mind of Eve. Who ever parleyed with the tempter and came away unsoiled in thought? A look at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, instead of removing doubt as to

God's reasonableness and goodness, the rather confirms it; and Eve deliberately violates the command of God, and induces her husband to partake with her. Thus entered sin into the lives of the first human beings. A sad day for earth and heaven! Spiritual death is now the lot of man, unless God can find a way out.

God visits Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the day. There is a hint here of the fellowship with God which our first parents enjoyed prior to their sin. But now they hide in confusion and shame from the presence of their Creator and Friend. Soon the whole story is told. Adam tries to transfer the blame, first to Eve, and ultimately to God, who gave her as his companion. Eve lays the blame on the crafty serpent that deceived her. Judgment is first pronounced on the serpent, then on Eve, and finally on Adam. The physical serpent, as the tool of the tempter, is doomed to a low and groveling life; the woman must suffer and serve; and the man must toil and sweat. The guilty pair are expelled from the garden and from access to the tree of life. Death rules over them as the penalty of transgression.

One ray of light pierces the darkness enveloping guilty man. Embedded in the curse on the tempter is a promise of victory to the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15). A terrible conflict is to be waged between the seed of the woman and the serpent and his progeny, and victory over the tempter will finally be won by the seed of the woman. This promise has been aptly called the First Gospel. It inspired hope in the fainting hearts of the exiles as they went forth from the garden of Eden to face the toils and sorrows of a cruel world.

7. GROWTH OF THE HUMAN RACE

The sacred writer follows the fortunes of our first parents as the Lord gives to them sons. Eve little imag-

ined that the son whom she welcomed as a gift from Jehovah would one day make his hands red in his brother's blood.

Why did Jehovah accept Abel's offering and reject that of Cain? Chiefly because Abel offered in faith, and Cain offered in unbelief. The Lord was patient toward Cain, and sought to turn him from the murderous impulse in his heart. Genesis 4:7 should probably be rendered: "If thou doest well, shall there not be a lifting up (of thy countenance)? and if thou doest not well, sin is crouching (like a wild beast) at the door, and unto thee is its desire; but thou shouldest rule over it." The Lord urges Cain to conquer the wild beast of hate before it springs to do murder. But Cain nursed his hatred until the opportunity came to slay his brother in secret. Speedily Jehovah came to reckon with the murderer. Cain's angry question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" has often come unbidden to selfish human lips down the centuries. The murderer becomes a wanderer on the face of the earth.

From the wicked line of Cain there came wonderful discoveries and inventions. One of his descendants, a polygamist, celebrated in martial song his prowess in slaying a man that wounded him. Violence began to fill the earth.

The knowledge of God was kept alive in the family of Seth. We are told that in the days of Enosh men began to call upon the name of Jehovah in worship.

The fifth chapter of Genesis has been called by a famous preacher the History of Nobodyism. The author gives a catalogue of names with little additional information. When we remember, however, that many generations may be omitted in the summary, it is a distinction to appear in that roll of honor. Just as Matthew omits in the genealogy of our Lord the names of Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, so Moses may have omitted from

this genealogical register many unimportant names (Matt. 1:8).

One verse in the midst of this long catalogue keeps it from being dull and commonplace. "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). In the midst of wickedness and infidelity, Enoch led a life of faith and piety; not apart from his fellows, but as the head of a household. His fellowship with God was so pleasing to the Almighty that He took him away from the sinful world to be with Himself. God translated him, that he should not see death.

The *longevity* of man in the beginning was far greater than it has ever been in the historic period. Perhaps man's life was shortened as a punishment for sin.

8. THE FLOOD

The human race, as it multiplied and spread abroad over the earth, grew in violence and wickedness. It seemed that it was almost a mistake that man had ever been created. The inspired writer puts the case strongly, representing God as being deeply grieved that he had made man (Gen. 6:6). Of course the language is highly figurative, and should be so interpreted. We should neither lower the conception of God to the realm of human blunders and vain regrets, nor empty these figures of the real grief of God over the spread of sin among mankind.

Jehovah decided to destroy the sinful race by the waters of a flood. Righteous Noah and his family found grace in the eyes of Jehovah. He would make a new beginning with Noah.

The question is often asked whether the Flood was strictly universal, or whether it merely covered the western part of Asia. The main purpose of the Flood was to destroy sinful men. Possibly a partial deluge was sufficient to accomplish that purpose. Of course nothing

but the mighty power of God could account for the Flood described in Genesis. All who reject the supernatural must reject the Flood as a historical fact. Our Lord Jesus refers to it in such a way as to seem to teach that it was a historical fact; and His authority is sufficient for all who believe in Him as the Son of God. He who existed before Abraham, He who was in the midst of the heavenly glory before the foundation of the world, surely He knows the story of the Flood.

After the terrible deluge, Noah came forth and offered sacrifices to Jehovah. The promise was made that never again should the earth be destroyed by a flood. The sacredness of human life receives a new emphasis in the covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:5, 6). The rainbow is invested with a rich significance as the pledge that Jehovah will no more destroy the earth with a flood (Gen. 9:8-17).

The Bible does not show partiality to the pious, but tells the truth about them. Noah drank wine until he became drunk. The conduct of his younger son was disgraceful, and brought upon him a curse. Shem and Japheth inherit a rich blessing as the reward of their filial reverence (Gen. 9:20-27).

9. FROM NOAH TO ABRAHAM

The tenth chapter of Genesis contains much information concerning the tribes and peoples adjacent to Israel. It is not intended, however, to be a history of the world between Noah and Abraham.

The eleventh chapter of Genesis tells the story of the tower of Babel, and traces the genealogy of Shem down to Abraham. The inspired author moves on rapidly until he comes to Abram.

10. FACTS AND DOCTRINES OF GREAT VALUE TO THE CHRISTIAN

What facts and doctrines, from the brief account of the Beginnings in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, have been taken up into the faith and life of Christians? It may be instructive to name some of the most important.

(1) God created the physical universe. The heavens and the earth came into existence by the creative activity of God.

(2) All life, whether plant or animal, owes its existence to the creative power of God.

(3) Man is a special creation. He was made in the likeness of God. He is akin to the lower animals, as possessing a body like theirs; he is akin to God, as possessing a moral and spiritual nature like God's.

(4) Marriage is ordained of God. He created woman as man's associate and helper. Polygamy and divorce are perversions of God's thought.

(5) The human race is a unity sprung from one pair. All men are brothers.

(6) In his original state, man was innocent. Through the temptation of the old serpent, Satan, sin entered the heart of man, and the image of God in man was almost destroyed. Physical and spiritual death came into mankind along with sin, as its penalty.

(7) The promise of Redemption follows closely upon the Fall. Even in the early generations there was forgiveness for sinful man. Abel was accepted, when he offered sacrifices in faith. Enoch walked with God in delightful fellowship. The promise as to the seed of the woman attaches itself to the line of Shem. His descendants were to give mankind the religion of Jehovah.

(8) The universe is under moral law. Sin leads to punishment. Justice and mercy are blended in the divine

rule. Sin and violence grew in volume and power until the earth had to be cleansed by the great judgment of the Flood. The grace of God shone forth in the preservation of Noah and in the covenant God made with him after the Flood.

Chapter II

THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD

11. THE WORLD IN ABRAHAM'S DAY

RECENT research makes Abraham a comparatively modern character. He was brought up at Ur, an ancient city in the fertile valley of the lower Euphrates near the head of the Persian Gulf, about 2000 B.C. Babylonia already possessed a civilization centuries old. Ur was a city of note, a center of the worship of Sin, the moon-god. The cities of Babylonia contained temples dedicated to the various deities of the country. Irrigating canals brought water into all parts of that fertile plain. The sciences and the arts of civilized life were well advanced. The art of writing had long been cultivated, and many records of events and contracts long prior to Abraham have been brought to light by the spade of modern explorers. Two thousand years before Abraham there were kings in the ancient cities of the region from which Abraham came. The sun and the moon and the stars were objects of worship throughout Babylonia. Polytheism, or the worship of many gods, prevailed everywhere.

Egypt was also hoary with age. The great pyramids had been standing for centuries before Abraham visited the Nile valley. Egyptian civilization had already reached its zenith.

Syria and Canaan were also inhabited long before the days of Abraham. Haran, the city at which he sojourned for a while on the way from Ur to Canaan, was also a center of the worship of the moon-god.

The coming and going of Abraham perhaps made little impression on the countries he visited. He came and went as the head of a family possessing flocks and herds and sojourning in tents. He was regarded as a sort of Bedouin chieftain by the peoples among whom he sojourned. Men little dreamed that the future moral and religious progress of the world depended in great measure upon the life and work of this dignified chieftain.

12. THE CALL OF ABRAM

How did it come about that Abraham should mean so much to the religious progress of mankind? The secret is disclosed in Genesis 12:1-3: "Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The electing love of Jehovah calls Abram to be a blessing to all mankind. Rich promises are laid as a foundation on which Abram is to build a life that shall be a blessing to all the families of the earth. Was there ever a loftier ideal held before the mind of a man? And right nobly did Abram respond to the divine promises and command. He followed Jehovah, as He led him far from his home and kindred into a strange land.

Whenever Abram's heart stood in special need of reassurance, Jehovah graciously renewed His promises. He also repeated the command that Abram should live on the highest possible moral and religious plane. Before entering into the covenant of circumcision, Jehovah said unto Abram, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). Jehovah urges

Abram to live in close touch with Himself and thus lead a life of moral perfection. High commands these!

13. ABRAM WORSHIPS JEHOVAH

When Abram arrived at Shechem, in the center of Canaan, Jehovah appeared to him and promised that He would give to his seed this land. Abram at once built an altar to Jehovah and worshiped. Wherever the patriarch went in the land of promise, he erected an altar to Jehovah, and called upon His name in public worship. Heathen altars were smoking on the hills about him, and the immoral and cruel rites of heathen religion were enacted before his eyes. Abram gave them an example of spiritual worship. He was not ashamed of the simplicity of the worship which Jehovah required. He bowed before a God of grace and love.

During the sojourn in Egypt, Abram seems to have left off the habit of public worship. This may help to account for the lower moral plane on which his life moved at that crisis. As soon as he was expelled from Egypt he returned through the South to the place of the altar near Bethel, and there he again called upon the name of Jehovah. The patriarch strengthened himself for his high calling by the habitual worship of the living God.

14. ABRAM NOT PERFECT

We should be tempted, like some modern critics, to think the picture of Abram legendary or mythical, if there were no instances of moral lapse in the record of his life. His "white lie" concerning his beautiful wife shows him as our brother in moral weakness. The patriarch leaves Egypt in disgrace, after suffering rebuke at the hands of a heathen king.

The goodness of Jehovah rescued him from similar

peril a second time at a later period. Some critics deem it unlikely that Abram would have repeated his blunder in representing that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife; but sin has a tendency to repeat itself in every life. Abram was not sinless. He climbed far up toward the peak of moral perfection; but its exalted crest ever beckoned him higher.

Abram's acquiescence in Sarah's suggestion that her handmaid take the place of the wife as the mother of the promised heir, seems to us now in Christian lands a serious moral lapse; but it was not so regarded in Abram's day; and he must be judged by the standards of his own time. We must rather regard it as a test of his faith, and count it as a momentary failure of the man of faith to leave all in God's hands.

15. ABRAM'S GENEROSITY AND NOBILITY

It is pleasant to turn from the picture of Abram's disgrace in Egypt to the scene on the uplands of Canaan, when he generously offered to his nephew half of the land which Jehovah had already promised as his own inheritance. He might have dismissed Lot in anger, reminding him that his prosperity had come through their association together. He did nothing of the kind. Recognizing Lot as his near kinsman, he urged that they part in love, and offered Lot the choice of either the northern or the southern half of the land. Lot foolishly plunged down from the hills into the wicked district of Sodom, in the Jordan valley. Jehovah graciously renews to His generous servant the promise of a goodly land and a numerous posterity (Gen. 13:14-18).

16. ABRAM'S COURAGE AND UNSELFISHNESS

When Lot was swept away by the four kings from the East, the courage and resourcefulness of Abram were

equal to the occasion. Calling to his aid all his allies, he mustered the men of his own camp and pursued the invaders. By a skillful night attack he put the enemy to flight, and recovered Lot and all the other captives from Sodom.

On his return from the victory over the invaders, he was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem, with bread and wine. Abram received the priestly blessing from Melchizedek, rejoicing to find in him a worshiper of God Most High. The patriarch gave him a tenth of all. Abram refused to take even a thread or a shoe-latchet from the wicked king of Sodom. Abram's courage and generosity and dignity of character are writ large in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis.

17. ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER

Lot returned to Sodom. The sinners of Sodom refused to heed the appeals of righteous Lot. He seemed to them to be fond of money, like other men. Finally the cry of the city went up to heaven, and Jehovah came down to see whether the city was hopelessly given over to sin. When Abraham learned of the danger, he began to plead for Sodom. He knew that there was one righteous man in the wicked city; and he hoped there might be more. Surely Lot had won at least nine others to a righteous life. So he pleaded with Jehovah to spare it for the sake of the few righteous men, who would perish along with the guilty. Abraham was earnest and importunate, and Jehovah was gracious and generous. Abraham did not succeed in averting the destruction of the wicked cities of the Plain; but "God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow" (Gen. 19:29). Abraham's prayer was really answered. "The narrative of Abraham's intercession for Sodom teaches the long-suffering mercy of God, the

efficacy of prayer, and the value in a city or nation of the leaven of righteous persons."

18. ABRAHAM'S FAITH SORELY TESTED

When the great patriarch is first introduced in the sacred story, he appears as a man of faith. He obeyed the command of Jehovah to leave his home and kindred and follow the beckoning of his divine Friend as He led him forth into an unknown land. He counted Jehovah as faithful, and put all into His keeping. Wherever he went he worshiped Jehovah. Every promise from Jehovah he took at its face value. He wavered not through unbelief. His life was pitched on a high moral plane, and he enjoyed constant fellowship with the Most High. Jehovah had promised to make his descendants as the dust of the earth, innumerable.

After the night attack on the kings from the East, Jehovah graciously appeared to Abram in a vision to encourage him not to fear that he would be destroyed on account of his brave deed. "Fear not," said Jehovah in the vision; "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). This gracious revelation encouraged Abram to speak of his childlessness. Often had he wondered why God had given him no son. The word of Jehovah came to him with the assurance that he should have a son and descendants innumerable as the stars. "And he believed in Jehovah; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness" (Gen 15:6). Such strong faith in God is the finest righteousness men can offer. This is not mere intellectual belief, but a complete surrender of heart and life to God who promises. Such is the faith that brings justification (Gal. 3:6-9). It is also a faith that brings forth works of righteousness (James 2:20-26).

As time went on, Sarah seems to have lost hope of

the fulfillment of the promise through her, and, in a moment of foolish generosity, suggested that Abram take Hagar as a secondary wife, that through her the promise might be fulfilled. Jealousy and heart-burning thus invaded Abram's home.

God presently promised that Sarah should be the mother of Abraham's heir. It seemed too wonderful at first to be a possibility; and Abraham begged that Ishmael might be his heir; but Abraham's faith rose to the height of believing that God could do what seemed impossible. His faith stood the test.

In due time Jehovah gave Abraham a son in his old age. Every one laughed for joyous wonder at the birth of the child, and so Abraham called him Isaac (laughter). His birth brought unspeakable joy to his father and mother. All their hopes centered in him. He grew up in an atmosphere of love and tender care.

God decided to subject Abraham to the severest possible test. The heathen about him in Canaan sometimes offered their sons on the altar of Moloch. Would Abraham be willing to make such a sacrifice to Jehovah? The test was made once for all; and the representative of the true God passed through the ordeal nobly. In his heart he made the great sacrifice, and gave back to God the son of promise. It was a terrible experience, nevermore to be repeated in this form among the worshipers of Jehovah. The angel of Jehovah arrested the uplifted hand of the patriarch as he was on the point of slaying his son. No man in his right mind who has read this story could ever imagine that the God of Abraham would require him to offer his son as a burnt-offering to Jehovah. The Old Testament speaks frequently with abhorrence of human sacrifices.

With Abraham the trial was almost unbearable; but his faith stood the test. He believed that God was able to restore the lad by a resurrection from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19).

When did Abraham see Christ's day? Was there in his career a more favorable moment for this great revelation than the hour in which he made the sacrifice of his son? Then was he qualified in some measure to receive the revelation of the great sacrifice God meant to make on behalf of the world (John 8:56-58).

God must be often grieved when His worshipers fail under trial. What a satisfaction the noble self-sacrifice of Abraham must have been to his divine Friend! We, too, may rejoice that the great representative believer of the Old Testament stood the test successfully. It ought to give us hope, as we face our own trials.

19. ABRAHAM'S PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION

1. The people of Israel, God's chosen nation, look back to Abraham as their father. He is the real fountain, rather than Jacob, from which the stream of Israelitish history flowed. See Isaiah 51:1, 2. Jehovah is the God of Abraham. Gen. 26:24; 31:42; Psa. 47:9.

2. Abraham was honored in a preëminent degree with the *friendship of God*. Isa. 41:8; 2 Chron. 20:7; James 2:23. The Arabs to-day refer to him as "the Friend."

3. Abraham was powerful in *intercessory prayer*.

4. Abraham was, in a real sense, a *prophet* of Jehovah. Gen. 20:7. Through him the world received wonderful revelations of God's character and purposes. The mission of Abraham received fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:13, 14.

5. Abraham enjoys a preëminence among the spirits of the blessed. Matt. 8:11; Luke 16:22.

6. Abraham enjoys the distinction of being called the *Father of Believers*. Gal 3:6-9, 29. His faith rested on the bare promise of God. Jews, Mohammedans, and Christians unite in honoring him as the representative man of faith. Luther once said, "If I had Abraham's faith, I should *be* Abraham."

20. ISAAC THE MEDITATIVE

Isaac was a youth of quiet habits. He was not strong and aggressive like Abraham and Jacob. He grieved much over the death of his mother. He was meditative and prayerful. "His life is an echo of the life of Abraham. All its vibrations arise from the powerful impulses given in the life of Abraham."

21. REBEKAH THE AGGRESSIVE

Rebekah was industrious and politic in her youth. Her courtesy to a stranger won for her an invitation to become the wife of Abraham's heir. She was quick to see the salient features of a situation, and knew how to achieve her purposes. She was by no means scrupulous in the use of means to attain her ends. She was ambitious and aggressive. Her younger son inherited much of her enterprise and ambition, and learned from her how to outwit a rival.

22. ESAU AND JACOB

The relations of these twin brothers to each other, to their parents, and to the plan of redemption, have given rise to much discussion.

1. What are the facts concerning Esau, the firstborn son?

a. He was fond of hunting and out-door life, his hairy covering being an index to his love of the field and the chase. He was of a roving disposition, fond of the sword and the bow. He was in his glory when at the head of a body of armed men with flashing swords.

b. He was attentive to his father. They petted each other.

c. He was a man whose animal appetites ruled him.

Hunger in sight of an inviting meal could not be resisted. He sold his birthright for one mess of pottage (Heb. 12:16, 17). Voluntary polygamy among the heathen is an index to his character.

d. He did not appreciate the value of the spiritual blessings granted to Abraham and Isaac. He longed for temporal prosperity and worldly power. He lacked the firm will and pious aspirations of Jacob. We hear of no Peniel in his history.

2. What are the facts concerning Jacob?

a. He was ambitious. He wished the very best in life.

b. He was shrewd and self-possessed. He knew how to attain his ends, and did not hesitate to employ questionable means.

c. He was persevering. The constancy of Jacob is a notable characteristic.

All these traits are elements of strength. He who possesses them may become a strong and selfish man, building himself up at the expense of others; but divine grace can utilize them in growing a strong and beautiful character.

d. Jacob had a growing appreciation of the covenant blessing. When he sought to win his father's blessing by deception, he perhaps thought chiefly of the material benefits that would accrue; but as he battled against dangers and trials, he came to appreciate more highly the spiritual elements in the promises made to Abraham and renewed to Isaac and himself. To be sure, even at Bethel he seems inclined to drive a bargain with the Almighty, promising the tithe in exchange for the divine protection in his wanderings (Gen. 28:20-22). During the long sojourn with Laban, Jacob did not lose sight of the God who appeared to him first in the dream at Bethel. Jehovah protected him and enriched him.

At Peniel Jacob's longing for the divine blessing be-

came a passion, and he said to the mighty wrestler who asked to be released, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Gen. 32:26).

e. Jacob's troubles led him to lean on Jehovah. His character ripened as he grew older.

At Peniel, when he thought of the near approach of the brother whom he had wronged, he was far more spiritual than he was when he deceived his blind old father. He betook himself to earnest prayer, confessing his unworthiness and pleading for protection for his family. He craves the fulfillment of God's promise (Gen. 32:9-12).

When the troubles in connection with his daughter assailed Jacob, he was told to go up to Bethel and erect an altar unto the God who appeared to him there as he fled from Esau. Jacob there entered into a closer fellowship with God.

The death of Rachel was a heavy blow to Jacob; but a few years later the most staggering blow of all fell upon the old patriarch, when his sons came home bringing in their hands Joseph's fine coat all covered with blood. He refused to be comforted over the loss of his favorite son. For years he mourned for Joseph.

Next came the famine, and the captivity of Simeon in Egypt. When his sons informed him that Benjamin must accompany them on their next visit to the granaries of the Nile, the old patriarch's cup of sorrow was full to overflowing, and he cried out: "Ye have bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me" (Gen. 42:36). But it was the dense darkness that precedes the dawn. Ere long Jacob was on his way to Egypt to see his son Joseph. Near the border of Egypt father and son were once more united; and the patriarch's closing days were spent under the loving protection of his noble son.

When Joseph led his father into the palace to meet

the king of Egypt, it was not Jacob the wily supplanter, but Israel the saint, who lifted his hands to bless Pharaoh. Divine grace achieved a wonderful triumph in the life of Jacob. God demonstrated in his case that grace can transform a selfish man into a saint.

Faith was the power in the experience of the patriarchs that lifted them above their contemporaries. Delitzsch happily describes Abraham as "the man of world-conquering faith, as Isaac was the man of quietly enduring faith, and Jacob the man of wrestling faith."

23. THE INSPIRING CAREER OF JOSEPH

It has been well said that Joseph was a Christian before the advent of Christ. He is in many respects the most Christlike character in the Old Testament. What are some of the chief lessons of permanent value to be gleaned from the story of his life?

1. *The value of a high ambition.* While yet a lad he was dreaming dreams of future greatness. He saw himself at the head of his family. No doubt a selfish element entered into these youthful dreams; but persecution and fiery trials purged out the dross, and left remaining the pure gold of an exalted ambition.

2. *A lesson of personal purity.* Though sorely tempted, he kept himself pure. He might have excused himself on the ground that he was not the tempter, and that the fault would be that of his master's wife. But for Joseph's deep religious life, the temptation would probably have swept him into the abyss of impurity; for he had all the attractions and impulses of a vigorous manhood. Gratitude to a kind and confiding master had its part in restraining Joseph from surrendering to the solicitations of the temptress; but it was his religion that helped him most. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Long ago he had resolved to lead a clean life. He could not now consent to do

what would displease and dishonor the God of his fathers.

3. *A successful business career is possible for the faithful servant of God.* Religion and business need not be divorced, as many weak Christians have imagined. Joseph never lowered the standard of right in order to win success. He climbed to the giddy height of success and power, without in the least compromising his principles.

4. *The importance of caring for our kindred.* Joseph's treatment of his brothers when they first appeared before him in Egypt seems at first blush rather harsh. We learn, however, that it cost him much effort to control his feelings of love and compassion. He adopted a wise course, and held himself firmly to it. Just as soon as it was wise and safe for him to make himself known, he lavished upon his brothers the affection which already filled his heart almost to bursting. He was not ashamed of his brothers in their poverty. His kindness to his aged father was beautiful to behold. He led the stooping patriarch into the presence of Pharaoh and the court, and introduced him to his distinguished friends. Busy as he was with the affairs of the empire, he found time to visit his father repeatedly. He provided bountifully for his kindred, and rejoiced that they could be with him to share his glory.

5. *Through the cross to the crown!* Before the coming of God's Son to die for our sins on the cross, Joseph's career taught men the value of suffering. He was persecuted and slandered and neglected. He spent the best years of his youth and early manhood in slavery and in prison, not for doing wrong but because he refused to do wrong. And he endured it all without complaint. He believed that the God of his fathers would bring good out of evil. His faith did not fail. He believed that all things work together for good to them that love God. Wherever the story of Joseph is told, faith in God's fatherly care of His children is strengthened.

Like Moses, Joseph endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.

24. JUDAH'S SELF-SACRIFICE

Judah's early life will not bear favorable comparison with that of Joseph. Appetite and passion asserted their power over him. As time went on, however, the character of Judah became transformed. Endowed with qualities of leadership, he became the spokesman of the brothers in their dealings with their father and also with strangers. Judah became surety for the safe return of Benjamin. When Joseph's stratagem puts Benjamin in his power, Judah pleads the cause of his youngest brother, and nobly volunteers to abide in his stead as a slave to Joseph (Gen. 44:18-34). Judah's speech on behalf of Benjamin is the most pathetic in all literature. He, too, like Joseph, is brought face to face with the doctrine of the cross; and he hesitates not, but bravely offers himself as a substitute for his guilty brother. Surely a book containing such exalted teaching will never become antiquated.

Inasmuch as Judah anticipated the substitutionary sacrifice of the Christ, it was fitting that he should be placed at the head of his brethren as ruler. From Judah should spring the Prince of Peace, unto whom the peoples shall be obedient (Gen. 49:8-12).

Chapter III *

JOB, THE SORELY TRIED SAINT

25. THE AUTHOR OF JOB

THE author of the Book of Job was one of the greatest thinkers and writers in all literature. Who he was, and when he lived, no man knows. Biblical scholars differ widely as to the age in which the author of this magnificent poem lived. At one time it was thought that Moses was the author; and much can be said in favor of this view. Most recent critical scholars favor a much later date for the composition of the book. Fortunately for the Christian reader, the question of date is not very important. No one disputes the right of the book to a place among the Scriptures of the Old Testament; and all who have ever really studied it have assigned it a place among the great books of the world.

26. IS THE BOOK HISTORICAL?

Bible students have not been agreed as to the historical character of the book. Some have even contended that the story is altogether a parable; while others have thought that the book is literal history from beginning to end, and that the speeches are reported just as they were spoken. Most scholars have taken a position between these two extreme views. They believe that Job was a historical character; that he suffered terrible afflictions as a test of his faith; and that he came through the fiery trial without renouncing his faith in God. The

* Chapter III may be omitted by teachers who use this Manual as a guide to the study of Old Testament History.

references to Job, in Ezekiel 14: 14, 20 and James 5: 11, seem to establish the fact that Job really lived and suffered and came off victorious. But it is highly improbable that four men would carry on a lengthy debate in the most elevated poetry. Here the Revised Version comes to the aid of the English reader by printing Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Lamentations in the form of poetry. All the speeches of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, and the Almighty are in poetry of the highest type. "Poetic license" is a familiar phrase in the study of all literatures. The poet is free to shape his material in ways that would be considered improper in a historian. The author of Job, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, discusses some of the deepest problems connected with God's government of the world. He was not a mere historical reporter trying to give *verbatim* the speeches of a group of men living in the patriarchal period. We may not be able, on this view, to separate sharply the historical kernel of the story from the poetic covering: nor do we need to be unduly curious on the subject; for the message of the book is substantially the same, whether we conceive of it as a parable, or literal history, or history worked over with poetic embellishment. The inspiration inheres in the teachings presented by the great poet who wrote the book. God gave the author a message that suffering saints need to hear. He cleared away imperfect notions as to the relation between suffering and sin, and laid a foundation for the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles as to the place of suffering in the experience of the saints. Whatever the author of Job teaches, is part of the progressive revelation of God to mankind.

27. WHEREIN IS THE BOOK INSPIRED?

How are we to regard the utterances of Job and his friends? Are the views advanced by the three friends

to be accepted as true, because they are found in an inspired book? We are warned against such a mistake by the author of the book, when he represents Jehovah as saying to Eliphaz: "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job 42:7). Are we to infer from this statement that all Job's utterances are endorsed by the Almighty? Not as authoritative teaching; for we are told that Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said—

"Who is this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?"

(Job 38:1,2.)

Jehovah even refers sarcastically to Job as claiming too much for himself (Job 38:19-21); and Job himself refers to his ravings as the speeches of "one that is desperate" (Job 6:26). In contrast with his three friends, Job spoke what was right; for he never wilfully perverted facts to carry his point. He grew desperate, and criticized adversely God's moral government, because the facts, as he understood them, seemed to force him to do so; but he still yearned for an interview with God, and hoped for light on the dark problem that oppressed his soul. Let it be understood once for all that the Book of Job must be studied and interpreted as a whole, if we would get from it the lessons God would have us learn. Although there is much truth in the speeches of Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, Elihu, and Job, the inspired author of Job did not endorse all that any one of them said. He even reports the false insinuations of Satan; but no sane student of the book would think of quoting these as true and authoritative utterances. It ought to be plain to the reader who has followed the discussion thus far, that the student of the Book of Job must be

alert and painstaking, if he would not go astray in his thinking.

28. A PROLOGUE IN PROSE (CHAPTERS 1 AND 2)

The author tells the story of Job's great prosperity and unique piety (1:1-5). The scene suddenly shifts from earth to heaven, and Jehovah calls the attention of Satan to Job's remarkable piety. Satan replies that it pays Job to be pious, because Jehovah has protected him and made him very prosperous. He boldly asserts that Job will renounce God, if his property is snatched away. He receives permission to put Job to the test (1:6-12). Armed with power over Job's property, including his family, Satan brings calamity after calamity upon the head of the unsuspecting patriarch. One messenger treads upon the heels of another with tidings of disaster and death. The climax is reached when the last messenger announces the sudden destruction of all Job's children by a cyclone. The bereaved saint bows his head in submission to the divine will, and praises the name of Jehovah (1:13-22).

Satan does not surrender his contention that Job will renounce God, if a test severe enough is applied. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has will he give for his life," says the Adversary. He boldly affirms his belief that severe bodily affliction will make Job surrender his allegiance to God. He receives permission to afflict Job as he pleases; only he must not kill him (2:1-6). Satan afflicts Job with sore boils. He is such a loathsome sight that even his wife urges him to renounce God and die; but the patriarch, on his ash-heap, rebukes his wife for her foolish suggestion, and bows to the will of God (2:7-10).

Job's three distinguished friends visit him to bemoan him and to comfort him. Amazed at his pitiable condi-

tion, they rend their robes and sit with him on the ground seven days and seven nights in painful silence (2:11-13).

29. THE DEBATE BETWEEN JOB AND HIS FRIENDS

Next follows the main body of the book, in the form of a debate between Job and his three friends (chapters 3-31). Job is the first to break the silence with a vehement curse on the day of his birth. He longs even now for death (chapter 3). Eliphaz, the eldest and most dignified of his friends, rebukes him for fainting under his affliction, and reminds him that the innocent do not perish. Mortal man cannot be just before God; and it is foolish to become vexed. He counsels Job not to despise the chastening of the Almighty, but to seek unto God and get right with Him (chapters 4 and 5).

Eliphaz and the other friends think that Job must have fallen into some serious sin; else grievous disaster would not have been sent upon him. The theory which they stubbornly defend may be stated in three propositions: (1) All suffering is due to sin. (2) Great suffering is proof that God has discovered serious sin in the life. (3) Therefore Job must have fallen from his integrity; since God is punishing him so severely. They argue that God never punishes the innocent. Their theory leaves no room, in God's providential rule, for suffering as the trial of a righteous man's faith.

Job almost certainly held the view advocated by his friends, until his own experience led him to call it in question. He knew that he had not turned away from God. He was never more faithful and upright than he was when disasters and afflictions overtook him. He could not, in the light of his own experience, any longer hold the view that terrible suffering is sent only as a punishment or chastisement of fearful sin.

Job rebukes his friends for the unkind insinuation

that he needs to get right with God, and challenges them to show wherein he has erred (chapters 6 and 7).

Bildad emphasizes the *justice* of God, intimating that Job's children were destroyed on account of their sins, and asserts that the godless man always perishes (chapter 8). Job is so absorbed in the problem of his relation to God that he pays no attention to Bildad's argument (chapters 9 and 10).

Zophar calls attention to God's *wisdom*. The Almighty knows Job thoroughly. He urges Job to get right with God, and put iniquity far from him (chapter 11).

Job grows sarcastic and asserts that he is not inferior to his friends in knowledge. They are forgers of lies (chapters 12-14).

The friends were unable to bring Job to confession and repentance by their arguments founded on the character and attributes of God. They next try to arouse Job to confession and amendment of life by picturing the horrible fate of the wicked man. Job understands well that they regard him as now belonging among the wicked, though they hope to win him back to a life of integrity and consequent prosperity. He tells them that they are miserable comforters, and boldly denies that the wicked man always comes to a sad end. Often he prospers to old age, and receives honorable burial. The insinuations and doctrines of the three friends are alike false (chapters 15-21).

Eliphaz next openly accused Job of great wickedness. He, of course, had no evidence to that effect, except only the theory that great suffering was infallible proof of great sin. Instead of readjusting his theory to conform to all the facts, he perverted the facts in the interest of the theory. Bildad, when his turn comes, deals out a few platitudes; while Zophar remains dumb. Job insists more vigorously than before that all sorts of wicked men live in prosperity and security. The friends have

signally failed to sustain their theory (chapters 22-26).

Now that Job has the field all to himself, he describes the calamities that overtake the wicked. He perhaps felt that he had, in his earlier speeches, overstated the case, and now wished to look at the subject from another side. He, too, believes that the fear of God is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding (chapters 27 and 28).

Job next reviews his case. He describes first his former prosperity and the reverence shown him (chapter 29); then pictures his present abject condition (chapter 30); and finally repeats his plea of "not guilty" (chapter 31).

30. A YOUNG MAN SPEAKS

Elihu, a young man, who had listened carefully to the discussion between Job and his three friends, could no longer hold in, but gave vent to his desire to speak. He expressed surprise that the aged friends had shown so little wisdom in answering Job; and he rebuked Job for self-righteousness, and for irreverent speech about God's moral government. Elihu emphasizes the value of suffering as a means of recovering men from pride and from other sins. God chastens men with pain, in order to win them from sin to a more righteous life. Elihu points to God's greatness in nature as an evidence of His wisdom and justice (chapters 32-37).

31. THE ALMIGHTY SPEAKS

The Almighty then answered Job out of the whirlwind, and rebuked him for darkening counsel by words without knowledge. God's wisdom in the universe at large, and in the animal world, is described. Keenly sensible of his littleness, Job declines to reply to the Almighty. Jehovah next asks Job if he can capture the

hippopotamus or the crocodile. The vision of God overwhelms Job; and he repents in dust and ashes (38: 1 to 42: 6).

The Epilogue, in prose, relates how Jehovah rebuked the three friends and vindicated Job. Jehovah doubles the prosperity of Job (42: 7-17).

Having given a summary of the contents of the book, with special emphasis on the debate between Job and his friends, we turn next to trace the progress of the struggle in Job's mind, until he becomes victorious at every point. Let us try to see things through Job's eyes.

32. JOB'S CONDITION PRIOR TO HIS TRIAL

1. He was the most *pious* man of his time. Jehovah Himself said so.

2. He was one of the most *prosperous* men of his time. He was held in honor by all.

3. Job was *limited in knowledge* of the divine government, the divine nature, the future life, and all other religious subjects within the confines of knowledge possessed in the patriarchal period. Job was far in advance of the idolaters of his time; for, like Abraham, he believed in and worshiped the One Living God. He believed in God's power, wisdom, holiness, and providential care of His creatures. He believed that it would always be well with the righteous, both in his outer life and in his inner fellowship with God. Job gives no evidence of any knowledge of Satan and his relation to men.

If we wish to understand the struggle in Job's mind and heart, we must try to forget all that we have learned from the Bible. Not a book of the Old Testament had been written in his day; for he lived before Moses. The New Testament came many centuries later. Job never heard a single promise to the tempted and the suffering. He could not comfort himself with the thought that, "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." Close the Bible

and lay it aside, if you really wish to understand Job's fearful struggle. Remember, too, that the author of the Book of Job, in the opening chapters, lets us into a secret. Poor Job did not know what the author advertises to his readers, that Satan was trying to make Job renounce God. If Job could have known that Jehovah believed in him all the time, and claimed him as the most loyal servant He had in the earth, how much easier it had been to endure the afflictions that fell upon him! If Job had known about heaven and hell, as we have learned of them from Jesus, he would not have been oppressed with thoughts of Sheol as a land of darkness. He would not have been crying out of the gloom, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

33. JOB'S TRIALS

1. Loss of all his *property*, including his family. He stands the test nobly: "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah." He looks upon the loss as directly due to Jehovah's will.

2. Loss of *health*. Job is smitten with a form of leprosy. He suffers tortures, and has no hope of recovery. Seated among the ashes, and scraping himself with a potsherd, he rejects his wife's suggestion that he renounce God and die. "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

3. Job loses his *good name*. His three most distinguished friends, according to the orthodoxy of their time, regard him as having committed some sin to which his calamity may be directly traced. Hence they seek to lead him to confession of sin and repentance.

Recall these two facts: (1) Job seems to know nothing of Satan's enmity to the righteous. He seems wholly ignorant of his activity on the earth. (2) Like his three friends, Job regards his calamities as coming directly

from the Almighty. What can such blows from God mean? Job knows that he has not turned away from God. Why, then, has the Almighty become his adversary? His heaviest, most intolerable trial is the loss of God's friendship and help.

34. STAGES IN THE STRUGGLE

1. *A cry for death.* 3:1-26; 6:8-13.
2. *A plea for mercy*, mingled with remonstrance. 7:12-21.

3. *A threefold complaint*: (1) That man cannot have an interview with God, and if he could, there is no *umpire* between them. 9:11-21, 32-35. (2) That God seems to treat the righteous and the wicked alike. 9:22-24. (3) That early blessings from God were only a preparation for severe treatment later on. 10:8-17.

4. *A desperate resolve*—"I will argue my ways before Him." 13:13-28, especially verse 15 in American Standard Revision.

5. *A great question*—"If a man die, shall he live again?" 14:1-22, especially 7-15. There is a longing for future vindication; but the hope dies away on the sufferer's lips.

6. *A prayer for vindication.* 16:18 to 17:3. Job's sense of the divine anger reaches a climax in 16:6-17. Torn and bleeding, his face red with weeping, he asserts his integrity, and breaks out into a loud cry for vindication. Let not the earth cover his innocent blood! Then, turning to God, Job appeals to the inner God of grace and justice to maintain his right with the God of outward providence, who now afflicts him. Job's cry for a Divine Umpire, or Mediator, is a prophecy of the Incarnation and the Atonement. This great longing in the human soul receives satisfaction in the person and work of the Christ. Job closes with no hope. 17:6-16.

7. *A confession of faith.* 19:25-27. There must be

a future life, and in that future day my Kinsman-Redeemer shall vindicate me. God shall no longer appear as my enemy, but as my friend. On bleeding hands and feet, the suffering saint of this early time has climbed up the rough mountain side until, at last, with beating heart, he gets a glimpse over the crest into the glorious life beyond.

In 19:23, 24, Job expresses an earnest wish that his protestation of innocence might be preserved to all generations. He then rises to a higher platform, and declares his firm assurance, that, after death, he will be vindicated by God. The Hebrew word *Go'el*, translated *redeemer*, refers among men to the nearest blood-relation, on whom certain duties devolved in connection with the deceased whose *Go'el* he was. The *Go'el* avenged the murder of his kinsman; bought back or redeemed for his heirs property that had passed from his possession; and in general represented him after his death. In the prophetic Scriptures, the idea is deepened and widened so as to include atonement for sin. God is the *Go'el*, or Redeemer, of His people and of individual believers. Isa. 49:7; 54:5; Pss. 19:14; 103:4.

"Without my flesh" is in the Hebrew somewhat ambiguous. It might mean, "Looking from my flesh, I shall see God;" or, "After I have surrendered my flesh, I, as a disembodied spirit, shall see God." The latter seems to be the true meaning—*i.e.*, "After I have died under the ravages of my disease, I shall see God."

"Mine eyes shall behold, and not a stranger," might mean, "I myself, and not some other, shall see him," or "I shall see him, not as a stranger, or opponent, but as a friend." The latter is preferable.

"My reins consume within me" means "my feelings overcome me."

Job's anguish is not so acute after this magnificent declaration of faith, though his intellectual difficulties remain, and he still longs for an interview with God be-

fore death. He finally puts his three friends completely to rout, and challenges the Almighty to enter into judgment with him (31:35-40). At the close of Elihu's speech, the Almighty responds to Job's challenge. The vision of God awes Job into silence: he will not try to reply to Jehovah (40:1-5). At the close of Jehovah's second address, Job confesses his ignorance and his sinfulness. He leaves himself entirely in God's hands (42:1-6).

Satan has signally failed to make Job renounce God. In the midst of bereavement and bodily affliction, he bows in penitence before the Almighty. He can trust Jehovah, without an explanation of the afflictions that have overtaken him. He no longer demands to know why the righteous suffer, while the wicked often prosper. Faith lifts the sorely tried saint above his doubts and perplexities.

The test is at an end. Satan's work is reversed by Jehovah, who restores Job to a prosperity twice as great as that he formerly enjoyed. Weeping came in to lodge during the long night of trial, but joy came in the morning (42:7-17).

35. THE THEOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF JOB

The book must be interpreted as a whole. What did God reveal through the inspired author? We can only indicate certain doctrines that receive special emphasis in Job.

I. The Teaching as to Satan.

1. He is the adversary of good men. We cannot infer from the company he keeps that he is a good angel, a son of God. Some would make him a servant of God to whom has been committed the business of opposing men in their pretensions to a right standing before God. See Job 1 and Zechariah 3:1. He is not good, nor is he

morally indifferent; for he takes a malignant pleasure in accusing the pious before God. He richly deserves rebuke for trying to incite God against good men (Zech. 3:2). He really tries to make Job renounce God; and he attempts to secure the rejection of the high priest Joshua. He is the accuser, the slanderer of the saints. He can afflict and greatly hinder good men.

2. Satan is subject to the power of God, and can do nothing without His permission. We may well rejoice that he is neither omnipotent nor omniscient nor omnipresent, though far transcending man in power, cunning, and speed.

3. The Book of Job, apart from other Scriptures, leaves the attitude of Satan to the Almighty open to some doubt; though Davidson perhaps errs in saying that he is "zealous for God's honor" (Davidson's *Old Testament Theology*, pp. 303-4).

II. The Teaching as to God's Nature and Character.

1. Many passages from all the speakers in the book portray the power, wisdom, and holiness of God.

2. His *justice* in dispensing rewards and penalties on earth is the subject of keen debate. Job finds the solution in the future life.

3. The God who presides over outer events is contrasted by Job with the inner God, the God of providential rule with the God of love and faithfulness. This looks toward the doctrine of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. Job's appeal from God to God reveals a deep need of the human soul that could only be satisfied by the coming of the Son of God as the Mediator and Saviour.

III. The Teaching as to Eschatology.

1. Sheol cannot hold the righteous in prison and away from the presence of God. Compare Psalms 16, 17, 49, and 73.

2. There will be a judgment after death. The innocent sufferer will be vindicated, while the persecutors will be in danger.

3. The resurrection of the body is not clearly taught; but the way is prepared for the coming of that doctrine.

IV. The New View of Suffering in the Book.

Afflictions may be sent upon the righteous as a trial of their faith. If patiently borne, they lead to higher knowledge of God, a deepening of trust, a beautifying of character, and other rewards. They do not mean that God is angry with His servants. Moreover, God wishes His servants to trust Him, even in the dark. He does not try to vindicate His ways by argument, but shows Himself to the sufferer, that He may widen and deepen his thought of God's greatness. We can well afford to leave our case with the wise Creator and Preserver of all things. Trust Him always and everywhere!

Chapter IV

THE ERA OF MOSES AND JOSHUA

THE family of Jacob, in the course of centuries in Egypt, grew into a nation. A new king arose who knew not Joseph; and, at his suggestion, the Egyptians put the Hebrews under the yoke as bondmen. The Egyptians "made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field" (Ex. 1:14). As the Hebrews continued to grow and multiply, notwithstanding the rigor of their bondage, the decree went forth that all their male children should be put to death at birth (Ex. 1:15-22). In these troublous times a beautiful babe was born in a Hebrew home, who was predestined to be the deliverer, leader, and lawgiver of Israel.

36. PRESERVATION AND EDUCATION OF MOSES

The beautiful story of the babe in the basket-boat is such a favorite with children that we do not need to repeat it here. The mother of Moses, in her plan to save the life of her babe, happily combined faith and common sense. She did all that she could to achieve success, and trusted in Jehovah for His blessing on her efforts. She placed the ark where it would be found by the good princess, and set her daughter near by to make a happy suggestion at the right moment. Recent students of the mind are putting great emphasis on the power of suggestion. Happy the person who knows how to make a good suggestion at the psychological moment!

The babe was adopted by the princess as her son, and

his earliest education was entrusted to his own loving mother. Pharaoh's daughter offered her wages; but what wages did she wish other than the privilege of nursing her own babe under the protection of the court? While he was still a toddling infant, the boy learned the secret of his Hebrew birth, and received at his mother's knee a religious training that shaped his whole future career. These early years were the most important in his education. God brought it to pass that the oppressor should protect and train the deliverer of Israel.

While yet a small boy, Moses was taken into the palace as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. The best teachers in the land trained him, until he was instructed in all the wisdom of Egypt. No doubt Moses received his schooling in one of the best universities of the time. Promotion awaited him in any form of public service he might choose to enter, whether army, or navy, or civil administration.

37. THE CHOICE OF MOSES

The education of Moses is complete. He stands forth as a man in the prime of his powers, to do a man's work. He makes up his mind to cast in his lot with the people of God. He decides to visit his Hebrew brethren, and see how they fare. His soul was stirred by the sight of the heavy burdens laid upon them. When at length he came upon a cruel Egyptian beating a Hebrew, his wrath burst forth. "And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand" (Ex. 2:12). The fierce temper of Moses, which here burst all bounds, was later brought under admirable control, so that he became the meekest and most enduring man of his time (Num. 12:3).

The choice of Moses "rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for

a season," was a noble choice. The method, however, by which he undertook to deliver his people was rash and foolish. Almost immediately after the murder of the cruel Egyptian, Moses was compelled to flee for his life beyond the borders of Egypt. It seemed that his life must now prove a failure. In the wilderness of Midian he became a shepherd. A man trained to rule over an empire must now keep sheep for a living!

38. THE CALL OF MOSES

While Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law near Horeb, in the peninsula of Sinai, the angel of Jehovah appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. When the bush kept burning without being consumed (an apt illustration of the preservation of Israel in the fiery trial of Egyptian bondage), Moses turned aside to see why the bush was not consumed. God at once directed Moses to take off his sandals and stand at a respectful distance. Jehovah announces the good news that He has seen the affliction of Israel in Egypt, and is come down to deliver them from their oppressors. He calls Moses to undertake the task of leading Israel out of Egypt.

It seems to Moses that he is the last man in the world for such a task; for he had tried once and signally failed. "I will surely be with thee," is the reply of God. Under divine leadership, Moses will not fail (Ex. 3:1-12). Moses now inquires more particularly as to the divine name. "Who is it that sends me to Israel? What is the name of the God who will deliver the children of Israel from bondage?" God replies: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Henceforth His memorial name, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, shall be *Jehovah*. As the God of grace and redemption, God Almighty (El Shaddai) wishes to be known as Jehovah. The revelation of power and

mercy made to the patriarchs will be greatly surpassed in the redemptive grace about to be made known to their descendants (Ex. 3:13-22; 6:2-8). The children of Israel are to have experimental knowledge of God's grace superior to any revelation of earlier times.

Moses now raises the objection that his people will not believe him, when he tells them that Jehovah has sent him to deliver them. God equips him with three miraculous signs as evidences of a divine call (Ex. 4:1-9).

A third objection occurs to Moses: he is not a good speaker. Let Jehovah seek a more eloquent messenger. Jehovah replies: "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak" (Ex. 4:10-12).

Excuses having failed, Moses tries to beg off entirely: "Send any one except me." The anger of Jehovah was kindled against Moses, as it is against all who refuse to hear His call to any form of service, however difficult, and He makes him dependent on Aaron as his spokesman (Ex. 4:13-16). The two brothers meet at Horeb, and set out together to undertake the task of delivering Israel from bondage. They assemble the elders of Israel, who rejoice over the good news that Jehovah has come down to deliver them (Ex. 4:27-31).

39. CONTEST BETWEEN MOSES AND PHARAOH

Moses and Aaron had an audience with the king of Egypt, requesting that the children of Israel be allowed to go into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to Jehovah, their God. Pharaoh understood fully that this was only a polite way of asking that the Israelites be permitted to leave Egypt, no more to serve as bondmen. He responded by making their work heavier than before. He boldly defied Jehovah, as a God unknown and powerless to execute His purposes. Under the lash of the taskmaster, the soul of Israel was more distressed than it had

been. Even Moses seemed on the point of giving up, because Jehovah did not at once deliver His people (Ex. 5:1-23).

When Pharaoh refused to hearken to the sign of the rod that became a serpent, Jehovah brought in rapid succession the Ten Plagues upon the land of Egypt. The plagues became heavier with each refusal of Pharaoh to release the people of Jehovah. The conduct of Pharaoh had been described to Moses before he returned to Egypt. Jehovah foresaw the stubbornness and deceit with which Pharaoh would resist the attempt to lead Israel out of Egypt, and announced to Moses that He would harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he would resist the divine will to the bitter end. It may be instructive to notice the Scripture report of Pharaoh's attitude at the close of each plague. After the first plague, Pharaoh's heart "was strong. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he lay even this to heart" (Ex. 7:22, 23). When the plague of frogs had been removed, "Pharaoh made heavy his heart" (Ex. 8:15). The third plague made the magicians exclaim, "This is the finger of God;" but "Pharaoh's heart was strong, and he hearkened not unto them" (Ex. 8:19). When the plague of flies was removed, Pharaoh once more "made his heart heavy," and refused to let Israel go (Ex. 8:32). Divine forbearance gave Pharaoh another chance. A grievous murrain destroyed the cattle of the Egyptians, while of the cattle of the children of Israel not one died. For the fifth time "the heart of Pharaoh was heavy, and he did not let the people go" (Ex. 9:7). At the close of the sixth plague, we read for the first time that "*Jehovah* hardened (made strong) Pharaoh's heart." The stubborn and deceitful king had repeatedly refused to bow to the will of Jehovah. The God of the Hebrews now informs the haughty monarch that He will send all His plagues upon his heart and upon his people. He means to make of Pharaoh an object lesson and a warning to all the world

(Ex. 9:13-16). The thunderings and hail of the seventh plague so terrified Pharaoh that he confessed that he was in the wrong, and promised to let Israel go. The false king broke his promise again, as soon as relief came, "and hardened (made heavy) his heart, he and his servants" (Ex. 9:34, 35). His day of grace is past. Nothing remains but divine retribution for such treachery and stubbornness. At the close of the eighth plague, "Jehovah hardened (made strong) Pharaoh's heart" (Ex. 10:20). The plague of darkness leads Pharaoh to offer to let all the people go into the wilderness, if only their flocks and herds remain in Egypt. When Moses rejects the offer, "Jehovah hardened (made strong) Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go" (Ex. 10:27). When Jehovah smote the first-born at midnight throughout Egypt, Pharaoh at last gave his consent to let all the people and their flocks go. But it was not many days until he regretted the step he had taken, and set out in pursuit of the Israelites to bring them back as slaves. Jehovah shook off His puny adversary in the Red Sea, and thus made him a warning to all who begin to resist His will.

What God did to Pharaoh He will do to men now, if they imitate that lying and stubborn king. The man who begins to harden his heart will presently find God co-operating with him through the laws of the mind. He will pluck up courage to fight God to a finish; and that course spells destruction.

40. THE PASSOVER

The blood sprinkled on the side-posts and the lintels of the Israelite homes on the passover night was sacrificial blood. The blood of the innocent lamb slain for the passover atoned for the people who sprinkled it on their doors. The whole story of the institution of the passover is instructive to the Christian; for Christ is our passover. To the devout Israelite this annual feast was

a reminder of the grace of Jehovah in sparing the first-born of Israel on the night when He led forth the people from the house of bondage.

41. ISRAEL ENRICHED WITH PRESENTS

On the night of the passover, when the Egyptians were urgent that the people of Jehovah should at once depart from the land, the Israelites asked for rich presents of jewels and raiment. There was no suggestion of *borrowing*, but merely a request for gifts from those who had been their masters (Ex. 12:33-36, Revised Version). No doubt these rich gifts enabled Israel to build the costly tabernacle and its furniture.

The display of mighty power by Israel's God led a mixed multitude to cast in their lot with the Israelites and march forth under the leadership of Moses (Ex. 12:38). This mixed multitude of foreigners later led Israel into sin (Num. 11:4).

42. PILLAR OF CLOUD AND PILLAR OF FIRE

By day and by night Jehovah gave to the children of Israel a visible symbol of His guiding presence. He went before them to lead them in the way. When the Egyptians pursued them closely at the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud removed from before the camp and stood between Israel and the Egyptians. Jehovah thus encouraged His people to look to Him as their protector. He led them through all their journey from the land of bondage to the land of promise.

43. DELIVERANCE AT THE RED SEA

The contest with Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt before the Exodus gave Jehovah occasion to display His power in the ten plagues. He now decided to show forth

His power and grace toward Israel by a more signal victory over Pharaoh and his host. He leads Israel into a position from which it would seem to be impossible for them to escape from the pursuit of a trained army. Pharaoh, whose stubborn heart refused to learn the lesson his experience ought to have impressed upon him, at once resolved to pursue the runaway slaves and bring them back to their former tasks. Boldly pushing into the arm of the sea, which had been miraculously opened before the Israelites, Pharaoh and his host perished under the returning waters. Jehovah, by this signal deliverance of Israel, made good His title as the owner of the chosen people. He redeemed them and made them His forever. He left Israel without the slightest excuse to forsake Him for the worship of other gods. This notable deliverance could not fade from the memory of Israel. It was used by prophets and psalmists of later generations as an unanswerable argument for loyalty to Jehovah on the part of Israel. We, who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, are under even stronger obligations to honor and serve the One who redeemed us from sin and took us into fellowship with Himself.

Moses celebrated the grace and power of Jehovah in a song of singular beauty and fervor. We, too, do well to celebrate the mercies of the God who has delivered us from the slavery of sin. If the deliverance at the Red Sea was worthy of commemoration in song, how much more the redemption through the cross! We should girdle the earth with songs of gratitude and praise to our Redeemer.

44. TRIALS OF THE DESERT

Jehovah led Israel into a barren region where bread and water could not be found in quantity sufficient for the sustenance of a great host. Would the people trust Him as a God able and willing to give them all that

they needed? Were not His power and grace sufficiently manifest in the deliverance from Pharaoh to make them lean upon Him for help in the presence of any danger? Before we allow ourselves to look upon the fearful, murmuring Israelites as inferior to ourselves in faith, it would be well to try to put ourselves in imagination in their place. The trials of the march through the wilderness were greater than we may have imagined. Hunger and thirst assailed them before they arrived at Sinai, and there was no visible supply of either water or food in the long wilderness journey ahead of them. The situation was rendered more trying by the presence of women and little children. Jehovah did not see fit to anticipate their needs, but allowed thirst and hunger to assail the camp. Apart from supernatural aid, all must certainly perish together. Moreover, enemies began to lurk in the rear of the camp and cut off the feeblest of the people. The situation called for courageous faith; and Israel was unequal to the strain. Do not modern believers often fail under similar conditions? Do we always bring our troubles to God in believing prayer, trusting Him to find a way out? Unbelief and murmuring dishonor God in the twentieth century, just as they did in the long ago.

Jehovah always came to the relief of Israel, even though they murmured and complained. He sweetened for them the bitter waters (Ex. 15:22-26). He gave them bread from heaven for their hunger (Ex. 16:1-36). The only possible explanation of the manna is that God fed His people forty years in a supernatural way. Israel would have perished in the wilderness if Jehovah had not graciously fed them in a miraculous way. When the supply of water failed, He caused a copious stream to flow from the rock in Horeb (Ex. 17:1-7). When enemies assailed the camp, Jehovah gave victory to the men of war under Joshua (Ex. 17:8-16). Moses helped with his prayers and Joshua with his sword.

45. A BUSY LEADER

While Israel was encamped at Rephidim, near Sinai, Jethro, father-in-law of Moses, came to visit him, bringing with him the wife and the two sons of Moses. He rejoiced greatly because of Jehovah's great kindness to His oppressed people, and worshiped Him with a burnt-offering and sacrifices (Ex. 18: 1-12). Jethro observed Moses surrounded by the people all day long with cases requiring his attention as leader and judge in Israel. He suggested a division of labor by the organization of the people into thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens, with a leader over each group with authority to settle all disputes except the most difficult: only great matters were to be brought before Moses. This sensible plan, which was at once adopted, brought much relief to the busy leader of Israel. The divine presence and leadership in Israel did not relieve Moses from the necessity of exercising common sense and good judgment in his work. We may note, in passing, how an outsider may render signal service to the people of God by bringing to their aid his valuable experience and business sense (Ex. 18: 13-27).

46. THE GIVING OF THE LAW

Perhaps not more than a year had passed away after the call of Moses at Horeb, when he found himself back at the sacred mount at the head of a great host of people. It had been an eventful and significant year in the history of the kingdom of God. Jehovah, after long waiting, had redeemed the seed of Abraham from bondage, and brought them to Himself in the wilderness, apart from the busy life of the world, that He might impart to them His laws and precepts. The year spent at Sinai, though not so stirring and eventful as that immediately preceding, was truly epoch-making; for it witnessed the an-

nouncement of the Ten Commandments from the smoking mount, the ratification of the covenant between Jehovah and Israel, and the promulgation of most of the civil and ceremonial laws that were to govern the life of the people of Jehovah.

As a preparation for the meeting with Jehovah, the people were to become ceremonially clean, and to show reverence by not drawing nigh to gaze, lest the wrath of Jehovah consume them. Sinners cannot with safety press into the immediate presence of the holy God (Ex. 19: 1-15).

When all was ready, Jehovah manifested His glory on Mount Sinai with thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud. Moses led the people out from the camp to meet God and hear His commandments. Jehovah then proclaimed to the trembling people at the foot of Mount Sinai the Ten Words which lie at the foundation of His moral law (Ex. 19: 16 to 20: 17). That was a notable day in the history of religion. We reserve for special treatment, in a separate chapter, the significance of the moral, civil, and ceremonial law. Here we wish to emphasize the fact that God condescended to speak in the hearing of a nation the commandments that were to regulate their moral conduct. God also gave to Moses many ordinances and statutes for the direction of the elders and judges in Israel in the administration of justice (Ex. 21 to 23). The people accept these laws as authoritative, and enter into a solemn covenant to observe them (Ex. 24: 1-8). Jehovah admits Aaron and other leaders of Israel to a vision of His glorious presence on the mount (Ex. 24: 9-11).

Moses next enters the glory on the mount for a long interview with Jehovah. He receives the pattern of the tabernacle and of its furniture (Ex. 25 to 31).

47, THE BREACH OF THE COVENANT AND ITS RENEWAL

Moses tarries so long in the mountain that the people grow impatient and decide to make for themselves gods to lead them from Sinai. Aaron's weakness as a leader lies on the surface of the narrative. Instead of rebuking the people for impatience and rebellion against the commandments of Jehovah, he asks for jewels with which to fashion an image, and makes a golden calf. Perhaps he thought he could stem the tide setting in toward idolatry by proclaiming a feast to Jehovah. The people might worship before the image; but they could at least recognize Jehovah as their God (Ex. 32:1-6).

The anger of Jehovah was kindled against the rebellious nation at the foot of the mountain. But for the intercession of Moses, He would have consumed them. The nobility of Moses nowhere appears to greater advantage than in his intercessory prayers for his sinful people (Ex. 32:9-14, 31-32; 34:9; Num. 11:2; 12:13; 14:11-24; Deut. 9:12-20, 25-29; 33:1-29). Rejecting all offers of personal promotion as the father of a nation to grow up under Jehovah's protecting care, he pleaded with unselfish devotion that God would forgive Israel and lead them into the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jehovah heard the intercession of Moses and spared them for his sake.

But when Moses drew near to the riotous camp and caught sight of the idol and the dancing, his anger waxed hot, and he dashed the precious tables of the law to pieces at the foot of the mountain. Seizing the image of the calf, he cast it into the fire, ground it to powder, and scattered the ashes in the brook, that the people might be made to drink their miserable god (Ex. 32:15-20). After rebuking Aaron for his part in the sin, Moses called for volunteers to destroy the leaders of the rebellion against Jehovah from the camp. The tribe of Levi rallied about Moses, and cut down about three thou-

sand of the traitors (Ex. 32:21-29). Moses again ascends the mountain to plead with Jehovah to forgive the sin of the people. Jehovah promises that His angel shall go before the people; but announces that the return of God's presence to the sinful camp will mean punishment for transgressors (Ex. 32:30-35).

Israel having broken the covenant, Jehovah is free to do as He pleases. He offers to send an angel before them to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan; but He refuses to go up in person among such a stiff-necked people. He orders the proud sinners to strip themselves of all their ornaments (Ex. 33:1-6). Keenly sensible of his helplessness, Moses pleads for a deeper knowledge of Jehovah and His ways. He begs that Jehovah will lead His people in person (Ex. 33:12-16).

When Jehovah promises once more to be Israel's leader, Moses prays for a richer revelation of His glory. The history of religion shows that the man who is living in close fellowship with God is the one who most longs for a yet clearer vision of the divine glory. Jehovah gives to Moses as full a revelation of His character and glory as it was possible for him to have and yet live (Ex. 33:17 to 34:9). He renews the covenant with Israel (Ex. 34:10-28).

48. THE SHINING FACE

When Moses descended from the glorious experience with God in the mount, his face shone with celestial brightness. The people were at first afraid to draw near to him by reason of the glory of his countenance; but when he called to them, they drew near to listen to his words. Very instructive is this experience of the servant of Jehovah. Long waiting in the immediate presence of God illumines the face of the believer and makes him awe-inspiring to sinners. Thus the face of Stephen, as he sat on trial for his life, looked to the observer "as it

had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). The longer the saint stays away from close communion with God the more does the glory of his face and life fade. If the life is to be full of celestial glory, the interviews with God must be frequent and prolonged (2 Cor. 3:12-18). With the Christian the transformation from glory to glory is not dependent on time or place. An uninterrupted fellowship with the Lord Jesus is all that is required. It is also a mark of the true saint that he is surprised to learn that his face shines with heavenly glory. He wonders that men should discover in his life such brightness that they are reminded of the glory of God.

49. THE TABERNACLE BUILT

The Israelites had willingly given the treasure required to make the golden calf. Would Israel give freely for God's house? Proclamation was made that a free-will offering should be made of materials for the construction of the Tabernacle and all its furniture. The gifts that were brought every morning by both men and women soon amounted to more than was needed. The Tabernacle, and the ark, and the altars, and all the vessels were fashioned according to the pattern Moses had seen in the mount. When all was ready for use, the cloud covered the tent and the glory of Jehovah filled the Tabernacle. The public worship of the congregation of Israel had at last a central sanctuary (Ex. 35 to 40).

The rules of acceptable worship at the sanctuary are now given through Moses (Lev. 1 to 7). Aaron and his sons are set apart as priests. Nadab and Abihu are slain for offering strange fire before Jehovah, perhaps when drunk (Lev. 8 to 10). The ceremonial laws as to cleanliness of persons, houses, foods, social life, etc., are given in detail (Lev. 11 to 27). The numbering of the people, the order of march, additional ceremonial requirements, and the offerings of the princes of the tribes

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for the Tabernacle, etc., are described in the early chapters of Numbers (Num. 1:1 to 10:10).

50. THE JOURNEY FROM SINAI TO KADESH

The people leave Sinai, with the cloud of glory leading them toward Canaan (Num. 10:11-36). Soon murmurings break out among the people. The mixed multitude begin to long after the flesh-pots of Egypt. Moses becomes discouraged under his heavy burden, and begs for relief. Jehovah puts the Spirit upon seventy elders of Israel, and they prophesy; but they seem not to have been worthy of such honor, as they exercise the office for only one day. The beautiful unselfishness of Moses shines out in his wish that all the Lord's people were prophets like himself (Num. 11).

Human nature is at best very imperfect. A family quarrel broke out between Miriam and Aaron on the one hand and Moses and his Cushite wife on the other. Miriam was perhaps jealous of the power of the wife of Moses over the great leader. It is evident from the severe chastisement inflicted upon Miriam that she was in the wrong. Moses pleads with Jehovah on behalf of his erring sister, and she is healed (Num. 12:1-15).

51. THE FAILURE AT KADESH

Having arrived near the southern border of the promised land, Moses sent twelve spies into the country to learn all they could about the land and its inhabitants. Ten of the spies brought back a very discouraging report, stating that, while the land was fertile and attractive, the inhabitants were too strong for Israel to hope to drive them out. Caleb and Joshua tried to stem the tide of discouragement and despair that swept over the assembly. Open revolt against the leadership of Moses broke forth, and for the moment Caleb and Joshua were in danger of ston-

ing at the hands of the angry mob. Israel had come to a great crisis, and the people were unequal to the strain. Jehovah threatened to destroy them, and offered again to make of Moses and his descendants a great nation. Once again the unselfish leader prayed mightily for the faithless people. Jehovah heard his prayer, but announced that He would not lead that cowardly generation into Canaan. They were doomed to perish in the wilderness for their repeated rebellion. Jehovah would lead their children into the promised land (Num. 12:16 to 14:45).

52. THE YEARS OF WANDERING

The trials of Moses during the long period of aimless wandering in the wilderness must have been very severe. The rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram against the priestly supremacy of Aaron and the authority of Moses as leader was but one of many trying experiences (Num. 16).

53. THE SIN OF MOSES AND AARON

In the first month of the fortieth year, after nearly thirty-eight years of wandering and waiting, Israel is back at Kadesh-barnea again. Here Miriam dies. The generation that came out of Egypt has perished in the wilderness, and a new generation has grown up in its stead. Will the sons endure affliction any better than their fathers? Jehovah tests them by letting the supply of water fail. Like their fathers, they murmur and complain. The patience of Moses and Aaron at length fails them, and they make a proud address to the rebellious people. Moses in anger smites the rock twice; whereas God had commanded him merely to speak to it. Because they thus dishonor the holy God in the presence of the people, Moses and Aaron are told that they will not be

permitted to lead Israel into the promised land (Num. 20: 1-13).

When God puts men before the world as His representatives, He holds them to a strict account. Unbelief in a great leader of God's people brings reproach upon God Himself. If even Moses, after a long career of singular faithfulness, finally failed through human weakness, who may presume upon his past achievements? "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

54. CLOSING LABORS OF MOSES

Aaron died on Mount Hor. Moses, too, must soon lay down his task. Edom having refused Israel passage through his borders, Moses led the people first to the south and then to the east, to find a way to the country east of the Jordan (Num. 20: 14 to 21: 20). On the way they were bitten by fiery serpents. At the command of God, Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a standard. All who believed in Jehovah looked unto the serpent of brass and were healed. Our Lord saw in this story a type of Himself on the cross, as the appointed means of salvation for all who will look to Him in faith (John 3: 14, 15).

The fertile districts east of the Jordan were conquered by Israel under the leadership of Moses and Joshua (Num. 21: 21-35). Balak sent for the famous seer, Balaam, to curse Israel; but Jehovah made him the rather to bless them (Num. 22 to 24). The covetous prophet, disappointed over his failure to secure a rich reward from the king of Moab, sought revenge by inducing the women of Moab and Midian to invite the Israelites to join in the lascivious rites of Baal worship. He was slain by the Israelites in the war against Midian (Num. 25: 1-18; 31: 8, 16).

Moses asks Jehovah to name a man to lead Israel after

his death, and Jehovah directs him to ordain Joshua as his successor (Num. 27:12-23). Many ceremonial and civil ordinances were given through Moses in these closing months of his life (Num. 25 to 36).

55. DEUTERONOMY

This is one of the great books of the Old Testament. The aged lawgiver pours out his heart in earnest appeals to his people to love Jehovah and keep all His commandments. He reviews all the mighty acts of Jehovah in behalf of Israel, and exhorts Israel to be faithful and obedient. The style is free and flowing, as befits popular address. The Jews made no mistake in choosing six verses from Deuteronomy as the essence of their religion, which Jewish lads were required to commit to memory before being admitted to membership in the synagogue (Deut. 6:4-9). Jesus, who was fond of Deuteronomy, makes Deuteronomy 6:5 the first and greatest commandment. He placed alongside of it Lev. 19:18. The presence of these two sentences in the Pentateuch is alone sufficient to make the followers of Jesus revere these ancient books.

Moses not only delivered addresses in his closing days, but also "wrote this law" and delivered it to the priests for safe-keeping (Deut. 31:9). While we are nowhere told that Moses wrote every line of the Pentateuch, his activity as a writer is expressly asserted in the Pentateuch (Ex. 17:14; 34:27; Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:9, 22, 24-26). All Israel's historians and prophets and psalmists are agreed in ascribing the Law to Moses, and many of them speak of him as an author. Our Lord Jesus gave His endorsement to the view that Moses was a writer of Scripture (John 5:45-47). Modern radical criticism has gone too far in its opposition to Mosaic authorship. The plain reader who ascribes everything in the

Pentateuch to Moses as the responsible author is nearer the truth than the modern critics who talk learnedly of a host of unknown authors and editors.

Four poems are ascribed to Moses (Ex. 15; Deut. 32; 33; Psalm 90), all of them majestic in thought and expression.

56. GENERAL ESTIMATE OF MOSES

1. Moses was the greatest *prophet* of the Old Testament. God communed with him face to face (Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 34:10-12). Moses was a type of Jesus as prophet (Deut. 18:15-19).

2. The great *Lawgiver*. "The law was given by Moses" (John 1:17). He thus shaped the moral, civil, and ceremonial law for the chosen nation.

3. A prince of *intercessors* (Jer. 15:1). He was thoroughly unselfish in his praying (Deut. 9:18-20, 25-29).

4. The *meekest* man of his time (Num. 12:3). Patient and persevering, he stood up under a load that would have crushed almost any one else. Michael Angelo's great statue properly represents him as a man of great physical strength.

5. A great *soul-winner*. He induced his nation to put their trust in Jehovah. His skill and perseverance in winning Hobab to join the people of Jehovah are instructive and inspiring to soul-winners to-day (Num. 10:29-32).

57. JOSHUA CONQUERS CANAAN

Joshua had been the trusted helper of Moses for forty years. It was a sad day for him when Moses ascended to the top of Pisgah nevermore to lead the host of Israel. But he took up the unfinished task of his great captain, and led Israel across the Jordan to the conquest of Canaan. Joshua was well qualified for the work in hand; for he was a great general. Jehovah gave him special

tokens of His presence and blessing at the crossing of the Jordan and at the capture of Jericho (Josh. 1 to 6). The temporary reverse at Ai, caused by the covetous deed of Achan, was speedily followed by victory (Josh. 7, 8). Joshua drove the wedge through the center of the land by his great victory at Gibeon. He at once overran the southern part of the country (Josh. 9, 10). He then turned his attention to the north, and crushed the powerful league of Jabin by the waters of Merom (Josh. 11:1-15). Jehovah gave him victory in all parts of the land (Josh. 11:16 to 12:24).

58. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CANAANITES

The work of destroying completely the wicked peoples inhabiting Canaan was entrusted to Israel as an object lesson. They were made the executioners of the wrath of the holy God against peoples sunk in vice and corruption so great that there was no hope of reclaiming them. Skeptics have made a great outcry against the Bible and against the God of the Bible because of the command to exterminate the Canaanites. We must be frank enough to recognize the difficulty. Of course, no Christian nation could now treat a barbarous people thus without raising a storm of protest from the civilized world. While frankly recognizing the fact that such a program would not, in these days of Christian light, be recognized as coming from God, we ought not, therefore, to conclude that the Pentateuch and Joshua made a mistake in representing the command as coming from Jehovah. In the days of Moses and Joshua, and for centuries afterward, the nations in and around Canaan recognized the right of peoples to devote their enemies to destruction in a holy war. The consciences of the Israelites did not rebel against such a war, as our enlightened Christian consciences would. Hence it was possible to use the Israelites in that early time as executioners of the just wrath

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of God against the hopelessly corrupt Canaanites. Instead of employing pestilence or earthquake, Jehovah saw fit to destroy them by the sword of Israel. The lesson would thus be driven deep into the minds of the children of Israel that moral corruption finally leads to a frightful doom.

Israel did not, as a matter of fact, carry out fully the work of destroying the wicked tribes in Canaan. Many were left, who later taught Israel the impure rites of heathen life and worship.

59. SETTLEMENT OF THE TRIBES

If Joshua's first great work was the conquest of Canaan, the second was the division of the land among the tribes. He tried to stimulate the various tribes to complete the conquest of the land in every part (Josh. 13 to 21).

60. JOSHUA'S CLOSING DAYS

Imitating the great leader Moses, Joshua spoke earnest words to the people before he laid down his work (Josh. 23 and 24). He tried to commit Israel for all future time to faithfulness to Jehovah. He succeeded in quickening for the moment the loyalty of the leaders in Israel. As long as Joshua's associates and personal friends lived, the people were comparatively faithful. Joshua left a noble record. There is no serious blot on his character.

Chapter V*

THE LAW OF MOSES

THE uniform teaching of the Bible is that "the law was given through Moses" (John 1:17; 7:19; 5:45-47; Luke 24:27). Many modern critics take issue with this view; but their theories are burdened with more difficulties than the traditional view that Moses gave to Israel both its moral and its ritual laws. A brief discussion of each of the great sections of the Mosaic Law may well prove interesting and instructive to Christian students.

61. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FUNDAMENTAL

The ten words spoken by Jehovah from Mount Sinai and engraved on the two tables of stone lie at the foundation of Israel's laws. They may be described as Israel's constitution, all else in the Pentateuch comprising the statutory law. The ordinances and statutes of the civil and ritual law were subject to modification to meet the changing conditions in Israel's life; but the commandments abide unchanged and unchangeable. Christian scholars are agreed in accepting all of these great commandments, with the possible exception of the fourth, as binding upon all men to the end of time. Our Lord Jesus and His apostles gathered up into the body of their ethical and religious teaching these ancient prohibitions and precepts. Jesus took these commandments as a text for

* Teachers using this Manual as a text-book on Old Testament History will omit Chapter V.

His own higher and perfect teaching. He carried them into the realm of thought and feeling, requiring His disciples to abstain from anger and lust and foolish swearing, as being really violations of the commands against murder, adultery, and false swearing (Matt. 5: 17-37).

62. CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO THE SABBATH

Christian opinion and practice have not been uniform with regard to the observance of the sabbath. A few small bodies of Christians observe the seventh day (Saturday) as the stricter Jews do. Many have brought over into the Lord's Day (Sunday) the strict requirements of the Jewish sabbath, keeping the first day of the week as a Christian sabbath. These two parties insist that the law of the sabbath is binding upon Christians. At the other extreme, some teach that the sabbath idea is wholly eliminated from Christian life and teaching. They support their contention by our Lord's neglect of the strict Pharisaic rules for the observance of the sabbath (Luke 6: 1-11; 13: 10-17), and by Paul's teaching against the observance of days and seasons (Rom. 14: 5, 6; Gal. 4: 10, 11; Col. 2: 16, 17). Most evangelical Christians choose a middle course, observing the Lord's Day as a day of rest from ordinary secular labor, as well as a day for the worship of the risen Christ. This course seems to be more in accord with the example of our Lord, who observed the sabbath without regard for Pharisaic rules, but in the spirit and manner which God originally intended. To be sure, He asserted His lordship over the sabbath (Mark 2: 28); and He might have abrogated it altogether, if He had so desired. He seems, however, to recognize the sabbath as one of God's gifts to all mankind, and not merely to the Hebrew nation, when He says, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." His own example teaches that works of charity could be done on God's holy day; and He shows

that even the Law did not forbid works of necessity and mercy (Matt. 12:9-14).

The transition from the seventh day to the first day of the week seems to have been made in apostolic times and with apostolic approval (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). The strict requirements of the Jewish law as to picking up sticks or kindling fire on the sabbath were not, so far as we can learn, brought over into the early Christian observance of the Lord's Day as a day of rest and worship. Whenever the sabbath becomes a burden rather than a blessing, God's purpose in its institution is perverted. Paul's warning against the observance of days was a part of his teaching against the laying of the yoke of the Jewish law on the necks of believers. He stood for Christian liberty; and would have resisted the effort to convert the Lord's Day into a strict Jewish sabbath. Perhaps most Christians now err in allowing too much secular labor to be brought over into the Lord's Day.

The Ten Commandments fall naturally into two divisions: (1) Duties to God; (2) duties to our fellow men.

63. DUTIES TO GOD

(1) Worship only one God. This commandment is founded on the *unity* of God. The Old Testament in all its parts is opposed to polytheism, or the doctrine that there are many gods. It is the fashion now in some quarters to say that the prophets of the eighth century before Christ were the first to teach that there is only one God. The evidence for such a view is wholly inadequate. Moses no more believed in the existence of gods other than Jehovah than did Paul when he said, "There are gods many, and lords many" (I Cor. 8:5).

(2) Worship God without the use of images. The second commandment is founded on the *spirituality* of God. There was no image of Jehovah in the Tabernacle. The worship of images was expressly forbidden.

Roman Catholics are, in this matter, below the level of Judaism. The use of images for promoting worship is a relic of heathenism, and should have no place among Christians.

(3) Reverence God's name as standing for His nature. False swearing is an insult to God. Even irreverent use of God's name, whether in jest or in anger, is a violation of the third commandment.

(4) Keep God's day holy. (See discussion above as to the relation of Christians to the sabbath.)

64. DUTIES TO OUR FELLOWMEN

(5) Honor parents. Irreverence is a crying sin. The fifth commandment aims at the preservation of order in the home. It is the first commandment with a promise attached.

(6) Do not commit murder; for human life is sacred. Christian teachers in home and pulpit and press and school need to press this commandment home to the modern conscience in America. Homicide is frightfully frequent in our fair land.

(7) Do not commit adultery. This prohibition is founded on the sacredness of the marital tie. Our Lord makes it cover the inner realm of thought and feeling as thoroughly as that of outward acts.

(8) Do not steal. We need to be on our guard, lest we filch from another that which is his.

(9) Do not lie. Falsehood may rob another of property or reputation. The God of truth thunders against lying in all its forms.

(10) Do not covet. This is the most internal and searching of all the commandments. Paul tells us how this prohibition revealed to him his sinfulness (Rom. 7:7-11). Thought and desire are thus included in the moral world over which the God of Israel presides. He requires a good heart as well as a right life.

65. THE LAW OF LOVE

Our Lord Jesus reduces the commandments of the Old Testament to two: (1) Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. (2) Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Matt. 22: 34-40; Deut. 6: 5; Lev. 19: 18). He adds a third, that His followers shall love one another (John 13: 34, 35). He evidently means to require a love among His disciples like His own great love in laying down His life for others (John 15: 9-14). All the law of Christ is contained in one great command: Thou shalt love like me! Jesus loved the Father with all His heart, His neighbor as Himself, and His disciples with a love that led Him to lay down His life for them. He asks us to imitate Him in loving. Our conduct will then be perfect like His.

66. FIRST DRAFT OF THE CIVIL LAW

The ordinances found in Exodus 21 to 23, and 34, while containing some laws as to religious worship, are for the most part statutes for the regulation of the civil and social life of the Israelites. Jehovah adapts His requirements to the people. He takes the Hebrews as they are, and gradually educates them in justice and mercy. These precepts are not final, but part of a progressive revelation. God tolerated things then which He would not allow in the Christian dispensation. The law as to divorce is a good example of the accommodation of the laws to the condition of Israel (Deut. 24: 1-4). The Lord Jesus expressly teaches that this lowering of God's thought for marriage was a concession to the hardness of heart of the Israelites: "Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it hath not been so" (Matt. 19: 3-9). Many of the ordinances in the Mosaic Law were temporary, being adapted to the condition of Israel in that early time.

We are no more under bondage to the laws concerning slavery, polygamy, divorce, etc., than we are under the yoke of the Mosaic ritual. Legislators in Christian lands may well study these ancient laws for the regulation of Israel's social life; but they ought not to make the mistake of supposing that it would please Jehovah to see them incorporated, without modification, in the statutory law of a modern State.

There is a merciful side to all these statutes, if one studies them in the light of their origin. Abuses that were common among other ancient nations are expressly forbidden in Israel. The Law of Moses aims at protection for the innocent and the application of rigid justice to the criminal. There is much use of the death-penalty—far more than would be fitting in a code of laws for a modern State. Here, again, one ought to compare the Law of Moses with the Code of Hammurabi of Babylon, and note how much more severe are the penalties in the Babylonian Code. Jehovah was educating Israel through these statutes to set a higher value upon human life. Even now, however, the death-penalty ought to be inflicted for cold-blooded murder and brutal rape.

67. THE RITUAL LAW

The holiness of Jehovah lies at the foundation of the ritual laws of the Pentateuch: "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2). There is no sharp distinction in the Pentateuch between the moral and the ceremonial. Jehovah requires of Israel both moral uprightness and ceremonial purity. He wishes His people to be clean and pure in every department of their life. Whatever is distasteful to Jehovah is forbidden, whether it be a violation of the Ten Commandments or a trespass against common decency. Vulgarity and indecency of every sort must be removed from the people among whom Jehovah dwells. Some modern readers scoff at the laws

of decency and hygiene in the Pentateuch; but they are needed to-day in many social groups of our own land. The general effect of the reading of these ancient ritual laws makes for improved social conditions. Their educational value did not cease with the passing away of the ritual as a divine requirement. Christians may now eat any animal or bird or reptile, if they so desire; but the most wholesome meats are those which were allowed to the Israelites.

68. WHAT THE LAW COULD NOT DO

It is thought by many careless readers of the Pentateuch that the sacrificial system provided atonement for all sorts of sins in Israel. Davidson and others have shown that the Levitical system provides atonement only for sins of ignorance and weakness, but not for sins done with a high hand. For sins committed unwittingly (through error) the sin-offering provided atonement (Lev. 4:2, 3, 13, 14, 22, 23, 27, 28; 5:1-6). The trespass-offering likewise made atonement only for sins done in ignorance or through weakness (Lev. 5:14-19). Perhaps Leviticus 6:1-7 might seem to provide atonement for all sorts of sins; but it is probable that here, too, the sins named (theft, robbery, false swearing) are considered as flowing from human weakness. They are not done with a high hand. For many sins there was nothing left but a complete severance from Israel, either by death or expulsion from the congregation (Lev. 17:10; 18:29; 20:1-16, 27). The sacrificial system in the Pentateuch made no provision for atonement and forgiveness for such terrible sins. The blood of bulls and goats could not cover such sins.

Even the ritual of the Day of Atonement should be studied in the light of the distinction between sins of weakness and sins of open rebellion. The sacrifices of that annual atonement were intended to cover the sins of

the high priest and of the nation as a whole (Lev. 16). Human imperfections in the priest and the people called for atonement; and this annual ceremony was instituted for the benefit of those living in covenant relation with Jehovah. High-handed sinners had no part in the atonement.

Was there no way of escape, then, if individuals or the nation as a whole should commit sins of rebellion? We do not need to leave the Pentateuch to discover that the mercy of Jehovah could be invoked on behalf of rebellious sinners. God heard the prayers of Moses on behalf of the nation, and also on behalf of individuals (Ex. 32:7-14; Num. 12:9-14). Jehovah revealed Himself to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth; keeping loving-kindness for thousands, *forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*" (Ex. 34:6,7). He is also, as the following words show, a God of retributive righteousness, and will by no means let sin go unpunished. Prophets and psalmists, throughout the Old Testament period, unite in exalting the mercy of Jehovah to repentant sinners. The Fifty-first Psalm is proof enough that a soul guilty of murder and adultery could yet find forgiveness and cleansing through penitent confession. The righteous Ruler of Israel was merciful and gracious.

69. LESSONS FROM LEVITICUS

It may be suggestive to Christians to recall some of the principal rules of the Levitical Law.

(1) All offerings to God must be without blemish. He requires a perfect offering (Lev. 1:3, 10; 3:1, etc.). There was more leniency in free-will offerings, as not matters of debt, but of gift to God (Lev. 22:23).

(2) The first-fruits belong to Jehovah (Lev. 23:10). Do we put our religious offerings last of all? or does God come first?

(3) A sin unwittingly committed must be atoned for as soon as discovered (Lev. 4:2, 13, etc.).

(4) Official position brings corresponding responsibility, the sins of rulers calling for more expensive offerings (Lev. 4:3, 22, 27, 32). Is it worse for a pastor to refuse to pay his debts than it would be for a layman? See Matthew 5:19 for the sin of false teaching.

(5) Restitution in the case of theft or other wrong must be made (Lev. 5:15, 16; 6:5; 22:14; Num. 5:6-8. Compare Ex. 22:1-15). A professing Christian who takes the bankrupt law and afterwards grows rich, without paying his debts, should be sent to school to Moses.

(6) Care should be exercised in the cultivation of a life clean in every respect (Lev. 15:31; 18:30).

70. THE DEUTERONOMIC CODE

Perhaps it is hardly proper to speak of the legal section of the great address of Moses as a code; for it is a popular discussion of the moral, civil, and religious laws already given through Moses. Exhortations and warnings are interspersed among the statutes and precepts. The great lawgiver plies his people with reasons for observing Jehovah's commandments. He does not quote the laws previously given *verbatim*; but presents them in a popular manner, sometimes enlarging upon the brief code found in Exodus 21-23.

The core of the great lawgiver's closing message is the command to love Jehovah with all the heart (Deut. 6:4-9). Jehovah has shown His love to Israel by redeeming them from bondage and giving them His laws. Israel is Jehovah's peculiar treasure. He expects, in return for His electing love and faithfulness, the answering love and obedience of Israel.

The moral and spiritual interpretation of the laws in Deuteronomy seems to some scholars too high for the

period of Moses. The testimony of the Bible in all its parts is uniform in representing Moses as the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. Jehovah spoke with him face to face, and gave him unique revelation of His character and will. The words ascribed to Moses in Deuteronomy are a fitting climax to his life and work.

The value of these addresses as an education in mercy can scarcely be exaggerated. See especially Deuteronomy 15:1-18; 22:4; 23:15, 16, 19; 24:16, 19-22; 25:3; 26:12. Had the Israelites taught their children the Pentateuch as they were urged to do, the history of the nation would have been far different. The mistakes and sins of the period of the Judges would have been well-nigh impossible to a people saturated with Genesis and Deuteronomy.

71. INFERIORITY OF THE MOSAIC LAW TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

While defending the early revelation from unjust attack, we shall not make the mistake of assuming that the Bible is on a dead level. The fragmentary revelation made in old time to the fathers through the prophets, albeit a revelation from God, is as the light of the stars when compared to the noonday splendor of the revelation through God's own Son (Heb. 1:1-4). We may represent this inferiority from four different points of view, in each case taking a New Testament writer as our guide.

(1) In contrast with the freedom of the Christian life, the Law was a *yoke of bondage*. Peter describes the precepts of the ritual law as a yoke, "which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear" (Acts 15:10). Paul emphasizes the contrast, referring to the Mosaic system as "a yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). He shows how the disciples of Christ are not under the law (Gal. 5:3, 18). To the Christian "the whole law is fulfilled in one word,

even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Gal. 5:14).

(2) The Law was a *ministration of condemnation* and death; while the Gospel is a ministration of righteousness (II Cor. 3:1-11). The old covenant was one of the letter, on tables of stone; the new covenant is of the spirit. The glory of the old covenant was transitory and fading, like the shining of the face of Moses; the new covenant is permanent, and its glory shall ever increase. Paul delights in contrasting the glory of the Christian system with the inferior system for which he was once such a zealot (Rom. 4:13-15; 7:7-25; Gal. 2:15-21; 3:10-14). Our Lord must have had some such contrast in mind when He said of the great forerunner, the last prophet of the old dispensation: "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11-15).

(3) The Law was only a *tutor* to lead men into the school of Christ (Gal. 3:24). The Roman lad was led to school by a slave; at the door of the school he passed from the care of the slave into that of the teacher. The law could not make alive; but in Christ men become sons of God through faith (Gal. 3:23-29).

(4) The Law was *typical* of the New Covenant. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the great exponent of this way of looking at the Old Testament. One would do well to read the entire Epistle at one sitting, with this idea in mind. The entire letter is an exposition of the superiority of Christ and Christianity to Moses and Judaism. The old, as the type, is inferior to the new (see especially Hebrews 7:18, 19; 8:3-6; 9:23 to 10:4). The Christian, in contrast with the Jew, has a better covenant, a greater high priest, better promises, a greater and more perfect tabernacle, better sacrifices. The word "better" is the keyword in Hebrews.

The Law was a preparation for the Gospel. It made men feel the need of a great Saviour. Hearts were prepared to receive Him joyfully when He came. Though rejected by rulers of the chosen nation, He found many hearts hungry for His message.

The symbols and types of the Mosaic system are still instructive to the Christian. One of the greatest reasons for the study of the Old Testament is that the Christian may thereby understand better the office and work of his great Prophet, Priest, and King.

Chapter VI

THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

72. INTRODUCTORY

WE pass from Moses and Joshua quickly into the Dark Ages of Israel's history. The splendor of revelation fades into twilight, threatening to pass into the dense darkness of a starless night. The author of the Book of Judges describes the transition in a graphic manner: "And the people served Jehovah all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of Jehovah, that He had wrought for Israel. . . . And there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which He had wrought for Israel. And the children of Israel did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim; and they forsook Jehovah, the God of their fathers, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the peoples that were round about them, and bowed themselves down unto them: and they provoked Jehovah to anger" (Judges 2:7-12). The generation that had experimental knowledge of Jehovah's great work for Israel remained comparatively loyal to Him. There are clear intimations, however, even before the death of Joshua, of the entrance of idolatry among the people; for Joshua exhorts them, in his farewell address, to put away the foreign gods which were among them (Josh. 24:23). Israel did not teach the rising generation to know all the glorious deeds of Jehovah on behalf of His chosen

people. The precepts of the Law were not faithfully taught in their homes. The appointments of God for the culture of the religious life were neglected. Ignorance and indifference spread among all classes. The sharp distinction between Israel and the idolatrous peoples about them and among them rapidly disappeared. They began to intermarry with the heathen, and so naturally drifted into the worship of the cruel and indecent gods and goddesses of Canaan.

73. TWO STORIES INDICATIVE OF MORAL AND RELIGIOUS DECLINE

The ordinary reader needs to be told that the story of Micah and the Danites (Judges 17, 18) and the story of the outrage at Gibeah (Judges 19 to 21) belong to the period shortly after the death of Joshua. The Levite who officiated as priest before Micah's graven image was the grandson of Moses (Judges 18:30); and Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, was high priest at the time of the war against the tribe of Benjamin (Judges 20:28). The careless reader might infer, from the position of these stories at the end of the Book of Judges, that the events belong to the period after Samson; whereas they really describe the state of affairs in Israel shortly after the death of Joshua.

It is rather startling to discover that the grandson of Moses was willing to officiate as priest before a graven image. To be sure, he seems to have worshiped *Jehovah* through the image (Judges 18:6); but such worship was not acceptable to the God who said, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" (Ex. 20:4). It is evident that the ritual laws of the Pentateuch were not faithfully observed among the people.

The story of the frightful outrage at Gibeah reveals the presence of moral corruption in the tribe of Benjamin. The sin of the wicked men of Gibeah is condoned

by the whole tribe of Benjamin, who rally to the defense of their wicked brethren. Some of the worst fruits of heathenism have entered the moral life of Israel. The zeal of the main body of Israel in trying to weed out the offenders is proof that the nation as a whole had not yet sunk into Canaanite debauchery.

74. HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

The author represents the experiences of Israel during the long period of the Judges as a cycle that kept repeating itself. There were four stages in the cycle: (1) Israel forsook Jehovah for other gods; (2) Jehovah in anger sent an enemy against Israel to enslave them. (3) In their distress Israel cried to Jehovah for deliverance. (4) Jehovah in mercy raised up a leader to break the yoke of the oppressor. The victorious leader then became judge for the remainder of his life. Each generation refused to learn from the former generations the lesson that apostasy from Jehovah meant slavery to heathen oppressors.

75. MILITARY HEROES AND THEIR WEAKNESSES

In this period of political confusion the Spirit of God frequently clothed men with courage and power as soldiers. Some of the Judges were quite ignorant of the laws given through Moses; and several of them had a low moral standard. Jehovah condescended to use imperfect men for the preservation of Israel's national life. Patriotism was an ally of the true religion in Israel. It was a service to the religion of Jehovah to drive out the heathen invaders. Hence men like Jephthah and Samson are enrolled among the heroes of faith. The inspired writers do not for a moment endorse or defend their serious moral faults. We should not try to whitewash Ehud or Jephthah or Samson, any more than we would

dream of excusing David for immorality or Peter for denying his Lord. But those modern critics who think that the Bible would be a better book if *Judges* were altogether omitted from it, make a great mistake. No sane student has ever been incited to imitate the sins and follies of Samson by reading the story of his life. It is one of the remarkable characteristics of the Bible that it can speak plainly of matters commonly excluded from polite conversation, and yet not stimulate the evil in men's natures.

76. GLIMPSES OF THE LEADING JUDGES

1. Othniel drove out the invaders from Mesopotamia, who had oppressed Israel eight years. In his youth Othniel had won the hand of Caleb's daughter by his brave and successful attack on the strong town of Kiriath-sepher (Josh. 15:16-19). The Spirit of Jehovah came upon him one day as he was meditating on the sufferings of Israel, and he drew his sword and chased the invaders out of the land (Judges 3:7-11).

2. Eglon of Moab mightily oppressed Israel for eighteen years. Ehud, a left-handed Benjamite, resolved to assassinate the cruel king and free his people from the Moabite yoke. He drove a sharp sword through the body of the fat king, and then destroyed his army completely. The Bible tells the story of Ehud's deed without either praise or censure (Judges 3:12-30).

3. Deborah, a prophetess and female judge, possessed inspiration, skill, and courage. In emergencies God sometimes uses women to do work ordinarily committed to men. Deborah is perhaps the greatest character described in the Book of Judges. Whether seated under the palm-tree in the hill country of Ephraim, or going with Barak at the head of Israel's army, or singing the praises of Jehovah for the victory over Sisera, she is a picturesque and noble figure. She was the wife of Lappi-

doth, and calls herself "a mother in Israel" (Judges 4, 5).

4. The story of Gideon is a favorite with both young and old. God found Gideon discouraged and timid; but led him first to a stronger personal faith in Himself and then by degrees brought him to the point of attacking the host of Midian. Gideon hardly dared at first to assail idolatry among his own people; but when he had once made a beginning, by breaking down the altar of Baal and cutting down the image of Astarte beside it, the Spirit of God gave him courage to gather an army against the invaders. Jehovah stripped him of all his army but three hundred brave men anxious to drive out the plundering Midianites. By a skillful night attack he routed the Midianite host, and then pursued the foe until victory was complete. The story abounds in dramatic scenes. Gideon seems to have been uninstructed in the Mosaic Law, like most of the military leaders of the troubled period of the Judges. He made a costly golden ephod, which became an object of worship to his family and to all Israel. He also took many wives. Though refusing to accept the office of king over Israel, he yet lived in royal state (Judges 6-8).

5. Jephthah delivered the Israelites east of the Jordan from the inroads of the Ammonites. If one stops to consider the story of Jephthah's early life, he can well understand how such a rude chieftain would mingle with his devotion to Jehovah much of heathen ignorance and superstition. When diplomacy failed with the king of Ammon, Jephthah went out to battle, after having made a rash vow (perhaps in secret) that he would offer up as a burnt-offering the person who should meet him out of the door of his house, if he should return victorious. It was wrong to make such a vow, and it was wrong to execute it when made; but Jephthah felt in honor bound to keep it, even though it meant the sacrifice of his only daughter on the smoking altar. We can no more defend

this sacrifice than we can defend Samson's immoral acts. The Spirit of Jehovah clothed Jephthah with power in battle, and used him as a deliverer of Israel, so that he has a place among the heroes of faith (Judges 10-12).

6. Samson was a mixture of strength and weakness. How often must his pious father and mother have wondered at his strange tastes and peculiar deeds! He gambles and plays practical jokes and gives the reins to his animal appetites. He is not strong enough in his moral life to resist the charms of the Philistine women. One cheats him out of the secret of his riddle, and another betrays him into the hands of his enemies. Here we behold Samson the weakling.

When a young lion roars against him, he rends the fierce beast as he would rend a kid. When the Philistines shout against him, ropes and thongs are snapped like threads, and he leaps among them and slays a thousand men with his own hands. In desperation, the blind hero pulls a house down upon himself and his foes, that he may be avenged for the loss of his eyes. Here we behold Samson the mighty man (Judges 13-16).

77. THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

It is refreshing to turn from such pictures of blood and iron in this dark period of Israel's history to the charming story of Ruth. The narrative belongs to "the days when the judges judged," and "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." While Ruth and Naomi and Boaz would be interesting characters in any age, the story of their faith and noble conduct is all the more attractive in its setting. We cannot help believing that there were other instances of charming home life even in the darkest periods of Israel's history.

The heroine of the book is Ruth. Naomi and Boaz were noble in thought and deed, but Ruth surpasses them in faith and devotion. She was probably converted to

faith in Israel's God by the beauty of the lives of the family into which she married. We know that Naomi was a woman of faith. Religion meant more in this Hebrew home than it did in Moabite households. Hence Ruth became a worshiper of the God of Israel.

The love of Ruth for her mother-in-law is beautiful and touching. The women of Bethlehem were right in their estimate, when they said to Naomi that her loving daughter-in-law was better to her than seven sons (Ruth 4:15). Industrious, modest, faithful, confiding, and affectionate, Ruth was a model daughter, and became a model wife. She was known throughout the community as a worthy woman. She not only had faith in God, but also had faith in good men. In obedience to Naomi's suggestion, she put herself in a position that would have been dangerous, if virtue in man were only a myth. She passed through every trial unscathed. The story of her life still ministers to the purity and beauty of sweet home life.

78. A GOOD MAN AND HIS WICKED SONS

The story of the Judges is not completed in the book of that name; for the early part of First Samuel tells the story of Eli and of Samuel, both of whom judged Israel.

The high priest Eli judged Israel forty years. There is no account of the campaign in which Eli earned the title of judge; but it was probably a campaign against the Philistines. Perhaps Samson and Eli were contemporary. The union of the two great offices of high priest and judge in one man gave to Eli a wonderful opportunity to elevate the moral and religious life of Israel. He seems to have been blameless and gracious, but by no means a strong and aggressive character. Sins of omission marred his career. He neglected the moral discipline of his two sons, who grew up slaves to appetite. They were adulterers and gluttons. The Tabernacle was pol-

luted by their vile deeds. Pious men in Israel went to worship reluctantly, because it seemed impossible that sacrifices interrupted by the gluttony of the priests should be pleasing to Jehovah. Jehovah sent a warning to Eli through an unnamed prophet; but the weak old man did nothing; in fact, it was too late now to train his sons aright. Jehovah's first revelation to the boy Samuel was a repetition of the judgment upon Eli for failing to restrain his sons from wickedness. At length war broke out between Israel and the Philistines; and Eli's wicked sons perished miserably beside the ark of God, which had been brought into the camp of Israel, that *it* might save them from the Philistines. Jehovah refused to honor the superstitious trust in the ark, but allowed it to fall into the hands of the enemy. When the Philistines, however, presented the ark before Dagon as a captured deity, Jehovah humbled Dagon and all his worshippers. The Philistines were finally glad to send the ark away (1 Sam. 1 to 6).

79. A PIOUS WOMAN AND HER NOBLE BOY

Hannah was truly a great woman. Her husband loved her devotedly. Two things, however, kept Hannah from perfect happiness: she had a rival in her home, and she had no son. Polygamy, at its best estate, was a perversion of God's thought for the home. Jealousy and heart-burning always attend upon the presence of more than one wife in the home. Hannah's rival provoked her by constantly reminding her of her childlessness. She did this all the more at the time of their annual visit to the Tabernacle to worship.

Hannah took her trouble to God in earnest silent prayer. Eli at first mistook her for a drunken woman; on learning his mistake, he invoked the blessing of God upon the pious suppliant. Hannah asked for a son, and promised to give him back to Jehovah all the days of his

life. As a sign of his complete dedication to God, no razor should come upon his head.

In due time Jehovah gave Hannah a son. She gave her whole thought and time, for the next two or three years, to the care of her child. Hannah was a great mother. She knew that the first years are the most important in education; and so she nursed and trained her child. When she had weaned him, she went once more to the house of God to present him to the aged high priest as Jehovah's representative, that he might minister unto Jehovah all his days. Samuel was a Levite by birth (1 Chron. 6:33), and so was qualified to be a helper at the sanctuary.

Eli soon discovered that the small boy had been well trained. He was alert and reliable and respectful. As Eli's eyes grew dim, the bright and industrious boy led him about and ran errands for him. Eli pronounced a blessing on Samuel's parents, and prayed that Jehovah would give them other children. Samuel ministered to Jehovah in the presence of Eli through the early years of childhood. The annual visit of his parents was the gladdest week of all the year to the growing boy. His mother always brought him a little robe which she had made with her own hands. Many confidential talks they had together during these yearly visits. Hannah now urged her boy to imitate pious old Eli and to avoid as far as possible all contact with his wicked sons. What would become of growing boys, if it were not for thoughtful, loving mothers?

Samuel's courtesy and self-control shine out in the story of his call to be a prophet. He was perhaps a lad twelve or thirteen years old when Jehovah called to him as he lay on his bed at night. Samuel thought it was Eli who was calling, and ran to the couch of the high priest to respond to the call. This he did three times, without the slightest hint of impatience or annoyance. Samuel loved Eli and took great pleasure in waiting on

him. At length Eli saw that it was Jehovah who was calling, and he told Samuel to answer the voice by saying, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant is listening." Jehovah announced to Samuel the rejection of Eli and his family from the priesthood. Samuel hesitated to tell Eli what he had learned. The next morning he was busier than he had ever been with the care of the sanctuary; for he did not wish to face Eli; but when he called Samuel and demanded to know what Jehovah had said, the lad told him every whit, and hid nothing from him.

The fame of Samuel soon spread throughout all Israel; for Jehovah kept coming to him with fresh messages, and all that he predicted came to pass.

We hear nothing of Samuel in connection with the capture of the ark. He perhaps remained at Shiloh with Eli during that fateful day, and sought refuge elsewhere after the death of Eli.

80. QUIET YEARS OF PREPARATION

During the next twenty years there is silence as to the events of history. What was Samuel doing during these years of Philistine oppression? We cannot think of him as idle. At the close of the period Samuel appears at a great assembly at Mizpah as the leader of Israel. He had preached a reformation among the people, urging them to put away the foreign gods and goddesses and to serve Jehovah alone. He became known far and wide as a great prophet and a man powerful in prayer. At Mizpah, Samuel led Israel in prayer and confession. He also presided as judge for the settlement of all disputes among the people. He was the leader in a great reformation. Jehovah heard his prayer for help against the Philistines, who planned to take the assembly by surprise, and gave Israel a great victory. Samuel set up a monument in commemoration of Jehovah's help. The people now threw off the Philistine yoke.

81. A NOBLE JUDGE

Samuel was now recognized as the Judge of Israel. He was loved and honored by all the people. He established a circuit in the central district about his home at Ramah, and held court at stated seasons in several different towns. Samuel was honest and just in all his decisions. Toward the close of his life he challenged the world to point to any case in which he had taken a bribe or perverted justice (1 Sam. 7:15-17; 12:1-5). He made a noble record as a judge.

82. THE DEMAND FOR A KING

Samuel was ambitious to perpetuate his name and influence through his sons. He therefore appointed them as judges at Beersheba, in the extreme south. Soon complaints began to be made that Samuel's two sons were taking bribes and perverting justice. They were wholly unlike their father in character and in conduct. The story of Eli's terrible mistake, which ought to have been deeply impressed upon Samuel above all others, seems to have been forgotten amid the cares of a busy life. While Samuel was teaching all Israel how to live right, he neglected the training of his own sons. Evil associations corrupted their morals. Too late the great prophet woke up to the sad fact that his sons had low ideals and were given to dishonest practices. A man has no other business so important as the moral training of his own sons.

War clouds began to lower on Israel's border. The Ammonites on the east and the Philistines in the southwest began to break in upon Israel; so that the people felt keenly the need of a strong leader and a well organized government to cope with the situation; hence the decision to ask for a king. Samuel was deeply grieved that he and his sons should be set aside by the people; but Jeho-

vah gave him to understand that he had less cause for anger than Himself; for the clamor for a king was, in effect, a rejection of Jehovah as king in Israel. Samuel was told to protest solemnly against the movement, and warn the people of the evil that would come in with the change from the theocracy to government by an earthly king. When the people insisted on having a king, Jehovah let them have their way (1 Sam. 8).

83. SAMUEL AND SAUL

The first man chosen as king was a man of commanding physical presence, towering above the heads of his fellows. Saul had not been known as a religious leader; and when he was seized with the prophetic enthusiasm that swayed other young men of his time, his experience came as a surprise to all who had known his former life. Saul's modesty and self-control at the time of his first public recognition as king won the respect of the people, and encouraged men to hope that he would be a wise and good ruler (1 Sam. 9, 10). His courage and skill in scattering the Ammonite invaders won the admiration of all Israel. Saul now had the enthusiastic support of the nation. Samuel proposed that the people celebrate the victory by a second recognition of Saul as king (1 Sam. 11).

Samuel's address at the renewal of the kingdom was a distinct disappointment to Saul. Instead of praising the people for desiring a king, Samuel reminded them that it was a lack of faith in Jehovah that made them demand a king to fight their battles. He warned the people that disobedience to the God of Israel would mean that both they and their king would be consumed (1 Sam. 12). Samuel was very fond of Saul, and wished him well in his rule over Israel; but he gave Saul to understand that he was under the authority of Jehovah, and must rule as a faithful servant of Israel's God. Saul

seems to have begun to look upon Samuel with suspicion and jealousy. He resolved in his own mind to be king and rule as he thought best. His lower nature began from this day on to assert itself more and more.

While Saul had scattered the Ammonites by one sudden blow, he found the Philistines far more stubborn and skillful in war. They invaded Israel in overwhelming numbers and took possession of most of the country west of the Jordan. The Israelites, unable to keep the field against the superior forces of the enemy, "hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in coverts, and in pits." Some of them fled to the country east of the Jordan. Saul did his best to keep the field; but his army "followed him trembling."

Samuel had promised to come to Gilgal within seven days to offer sacrifices to Jehovah on behalf of His oppressed people. He was late in coming, and the Hebrews began to desert from Saul's army. It seemed to the jealous king that he would be excusable in usurping the functions of the aged leader, who had tarried beyond the appointed time. So he offered the burnt-offering himself. Just as he had finished the sacrifice Samuel came. He rebuked Saul for his folly in disobeying the commandment of Jehovah, and announced that such conduct would lead to the rejection of Saul as king. He left the foolish king to his own resources and went back to Gibeah. Saul had thrown off the yoke of Samuel, apparently overlooking the fact that the prophet, as Jehovah's appointed representative, had a right to direct the conduct of Israel's king. It was not a mere personal quarrel between Saul and Samuel; for the prophet was Jehovah's mouthpiece. In rebelling against Samuel's directions, Saul was really throwing off the authority of Israel's God (1 Sam. 13:1-15).

Through the bravery of Jonathan, the Philistines were routed and chased out of the land of Israel. Saul's fickleness and cruelty are manifest in the story of his

rash vow and his effort to put Jonathan to death (1 Sam. 13:16 to 14:46). Saul's courage and capacity as a general receive generous recognition at the hands of the inspired historian (1 Sam. 14:47-52).

Saul receives through Samuel a command to destroy the Amalekites, who had made a cowardly attack on the Israelites as they were on their way out of Egypt to Sinai. These freebooters and robbers of the desert had no doubt continued their enmity toward their neighbors. The time had come for a reckoning. Saul disobeyed the commandment of Jehovah in sparing Agag and the best of the sheep and the cattle. His pride was gratified by the presence of the captive king; and the sheep and oxen would enable Israel to offer a great sacrifice to Jehovah without cost to themselves. When Samuel came down to meet Saul, he brushed aside the excuses of the self-willed king, and announced the final rejection of Saul: "Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, He hath also rejected thee from being king" (1 Sam. 15:1-23).

Saul now realizes that he has made a great blunder. He makes confession of his sin, and begs Samuel to pardon him, and recognize him as king by publicly worshipping Jehovah in his presence. If Samuel leaves him without some such recognition, he fears that he may actually lose his throne; for the aged prophet has great influence with the people. At first Samuel refuses, even to the point of tearing away from the grasp of the persistent king. Samuel speaks brave words to the foolish king; but finally, in a moment of weakness, he consents to offer sacrifice with Saul standing beside him as king. Saul has outwitted the good man. He can now say that Samuel's conduct does not square with his words. Saul

is resolved to keep his throne at any cost. He persuades Samuel to perform an act which nullifies his words. Samuel's inconsistency gave Saul the advantage, and encouraged him to pay no attention to the decree of rejection. Samuel became afraid of Saul; and any servant of God who compromises on a matter of principle will lose his courage in combating evil. He may assert his courage, as did Samuel when he seized a sword and hewed Agag in pieces in the presence of Saul; but the man who tempts him to compromise will ever after disdain him (1 Sam. 15:24-35):

84. SAMUEL'S CLOSING LABORS

Samuel's closing labors included the anointing of a king to take the place of Saul. The aged prophet had a weakness for men of fine physical presence. He imagined that the tall Eliab must surely be Jehovah's choice for the throne; but the Spirit checked the impulse to anoint him; "for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." When the ruddy and beautiful David was brought in from the fields, Jehovah commanded Samuel to anoint him in the midst of his brethren: "and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16).

Samuel withdrew as much as possible from public gaze in his closing years, devoting his time and energy to the teaching of young men in the schools of the prophets. In these guilds or schools young men studied sacred music and the history of God's rule in Israel. Revival fires were kindled in these prophetic centers, sometimes attended by great emotional excitement. David came for a short time under the influence of Samuel and the prophets (1 Sam. 19:18-24). Samuel died at an advanced age, during the period when Saul was pursuing David in the wilderness of Judah; "and all Israel gath-

ered themselves together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah" (1 Sam. 25:1).

85. GENERAL ESTIMATE OF SAMUEL

1. Samuel was a *prophet*, the first of a long line of prophets, and second only to Moses in molding the life of Israel.

2. He was a great and noble *judge*.

3. He was powerful in *intercessory prayer* (Jer. 15:1).

4. He was a *teacher* of young men. Many of the leaders of the next generation caught from him their inspiration to noble endeavor. He found Israel a medley of dissevered tribes; he left them a united nation. He led Israel out of the Dark Ages into the era of their greatest national glory and prosperity.

Chapter VII

DAVID AND THE PSALMS

86. DAVID AND SAMUEL

DAVID was easily the foremost of all the young men whom Samuel led to dedicate themselves to the service of Jehovah and His people. The paths of these two heroes of faith perhaps crossed only two or three times; but these interviews were epoch-making events in David's life.

When Samuel was sent by Jehovah to Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be king instead of the willful Saul, the Spirit held him back from the natural impulse to anoint the tallest of the eight brothers. When the youthful shepherd boy, with the beautiful eyes and the well-knit frame, was ushered into the presence of Samuel, Jehovah said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he;" "and the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon David from that day forward" (1 Sam. 16:1-13). Brave already from his earliest youth, David became even more courageous in defending his flock; gifted already as a musician, he brought yet sweeter notes from his harp; fond of the beauties of earth and sky, he saw new glories in the heavens, as he watched his flock by day and by night. The dreams and aspirations of his soul took more definite and substantial form after the anointing oil out of Samuel's horn descended upon his head.

When David was driven from the court of Saul, he took refuge for a while with Samuel at Naioth, near Ramah (1 Sam. 19:18-24). The aged prophet must have given much wise counsel to the young general, upon

whom rested the future of Jehovah's people. David found great inspiration in association with the noble prophet, who had done so much for the unification and spiritual uplift of Israel.

87. DAVID AND SAUL

Soon the brilliant harper was summoned to court to soothe the frenzied soul of the king, who was now living in open rebellion against the will of Jehovah. See Browning's *Saul* for a deeply interesting account of the shepherd boy's sublime devotion to his task. The world had never before heard such music, and seldom since has such a singer arisen. David found the keenest joy in chasing the evil spirit from the melancholy king. He learned to love Saul with a love that no injustice and cruelty could ever wholly quench.

We are not told how long this relation of mutual love and helpfulness lasted. It would seem that David, after some time, went back to his humble calling at Bethlehem. War broke out again between Israel and the Philistines; and David performed the brilliant feat of slaying the Philistine champion with a smooth stone out of his trusty sling. When the women met the returning victors, singing

"Saul hath slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands,"

Saul began to suspect that David was the man who was to supplant him on the throne of Israel. He "eyed David from that day and forward" (1 Sam. 16:14 to 18:9).

For several years Saul sought to destroy David. He tried to smite him to the wall with a javelin. He insulted David in every way possible. Then he tried to persuade others to slay him. At length he tried to cap-

ture David in his house, and pursued him to Ramah, where Samuel had given protection to the fugitive. Wallowing on the ground in intense physical excitement, Saul was unable to find and kill David (1 Sam. 18: 10 to 19: 24). David escaped from Ramah, and returned to seek Jonathan. The generous prince, having tried in vain to remove his father's jealousy, renewed his covenant with David and sent him away (1 Sam. 20).

88. DAVID AN OUTLAW

Saul's enmity made David an outlaw, though he was ever loyal to Saul, patiently waiting for Jehovah to open the way to the throne in His own time and way. David fled by way of Nob to Achish, king of Gath. His deception of the high priest on the way thither led later to the destruction of all the priest's family, except one son, who fled to David for refuge (1 Sam. 21: 1-9; 22: 6-23).

Wise men sometimes play the fool. David walked into Gath, a fugitive from Saul's court, wearing the big sword of Goliath, who was once the pride of that very city. He was quickly identified as the man who had killed Goliath, and who was now aspiring to the throne of Israel. Detectives dogged his steps and reported their observations to Achish. David's mother wit saved him from the trap, though at great loss of dignity and peace of mind. He escaped to the cave of Adullam, where he received his family, and collected a band of four hundred desperate men. By courage and firmness and tact, he soon became the idolized leader of this band.

David celebrated his deliverance from the Philistines in Gath by composing Psalm 56. The poem has many points of contact with his experiences at that time. The face of Saul looks out of verse 1; the detectives in Gath appear in verse 6; David's wanderings and tears in verse 8. The hairbreadth escape of the psalmist is celebrated

in the closing verse. See, for another monument of David's deliverance from Gath, the beautiful alphabetical poem known as Psalm 34. Jehovah's good angel delivered him (Psa. 34:7).

After a brief trip to the land of Moab for the purpose of providing a refuge for his father and mother, David returned to the south of Judah. The prophet Gad had meanwhile joined his band; and presently the only surviving son of the high priest came to him at Keilah with an ephod in his hand (1 Sam. 22:3-5; 23:1-6). Psalm 52 seems to have been composed by David when he received the news of Doeg's lying and cruelty in compassing the death of the high priest and his family. It is a fearful indictment of the liar.

As soon as Saul heard of David's expedition to Keilah, he planned to take the field against him with a picked force and capture him. For months he pursued David, sometimes almost overtaking him. Twice he fell into David's hands and was spared (1 Sam. 24, 26). The nobility of David shines forth in his generous treatment of the man who was continually hunting for his life. Psalms 54, 57, and 142 belong to this period.

89. DAVID GOES OVER TO THE PHILISTINES

David made the mistake of commencing the formation of a harem during the period of his flight from Saul. Naturally, he could no longer flee with his former speed and secrecy from one cave to another. He lost heart and resolved to go over to the Philistines. He was kindly received by Achish, who gave him Ziklag for a home. He made forays against his heathen neighbors south of Philistia (1 Sam. 25, 27). When the Philistines planned an invasion of Israel, Achish took David and his men along as part of his force. David's mind must have been disturbed, as he faced the alternative of

fighting against his own people or else of turning traitor to his great benefactor, Achish. The suspicions of the other Philistine lords happily relieved him of his dilemma. But when he and his men returned to Ziklag to see their families, lo, the city had been burned and their families carried captive. David's men naturally blamed their leader for this calamity, and openly spoke of stoning him. It was a crisis in David's career. His religion was his only solace, and he "strengthened himself in Jehovah his God" (1 Sam. 29:1 to 30:6). Jehovah encouraged him to pursue the troop that had carried captive the women and children. After a long and fatiguing pursuit, he recovered everything (1 Sam. 30).

When the news came that Saul and Jonathan had fallen in the disastrous battle of Gilboa, David composed a beautiful elegy, which he taught his people to sing. He generously couples the name of Saul, who had sought his life, with that of Jonathan, his noble friend (1 Sam. 31 to 2 Sam. 1). Even radical critics accept the genuineness of this elegy, though, in doing so, they cut the ground from beneath their own feet; for if David was noble enough and gifted enough to be the author of this poem, there is no longer any good reason why he may not have composed the many psalms ascribed to him in the Psalter.

90. DAVID KING OF JUDAH

Why did not all Israel turn to David as their king after the death of Saul and Jonathan? Why did Abner make the weakling, Ish-bosheth, king over the land? Why did the tribe of Judah alone recognize David's right to the throne? The explanation lies near the surface, though it seems to have escaped many students of David's life. All Israel at one time rejoiced in David's leadership in the army. He was the most popular man

in Israel. The fact of his anointing was perhaps unknown to the people at large at that time. It must have become known a little later, for Saul and others speak of David as the one who is to be king over Israel. Jonathan generously promises to support David as his prime minister (1 Sam. 24:20-22; 23:15-18). It became widely known that Jehovah had anointed David as the rightful king over Israel. Why, then, did the nation at large refuse to make David king after the death of Saul? For the good and sufficient reason that he had joined hands with the Philistines and marched out with them to battle. The story of his presence in the army of invasion had spread abroad among the men of Israel, and they could not understand it. Why should they make a man king to-day who but yesterday marched in the army of their oppressors? Who could blame them for feeling thus? The fault for this tangle was David's. When he took to himself two wives in the wilderness, while Saul was pursuing him, he made the first false step. That led naturally to a growing fear that Saul would some day capture him or his family; for women and children cannot flee so rapidly as men of war. Hence David decided to go into a foreign country, where he would be safe from attack by Saul. Being kindly received by Achish, he settled in his country, and was counted as a valuable ally. He could not well refuse to go forth with Achish to battle.

David ought to have learned from this bitter experience to avoid the first false step. Had he taken the lesson to heart, his name might never have been tarnished with the terrible sins of adultery and murder.

The tribe of Judah at once accepted David as king, and he reigned at Hebron for seven years and a half. His men were victorious in the war with the house of Saul. David behaved himself wisely, and gradually won back the northern tribes. Soon all Israel resolved to accept him as king (2 Sam. 2:1 to 5:5).

91. DAVID THE PROSPEROUS KING OF ISRAEL

David wisely decided to transfer the capital to a place nearer the center of his kingdom. He captured the fortress of Jebus, which was thought by the Jebusites to be impregnable, and made it the capital of Israel. The king of Tyre became a valuable ally to David, sending men and materials to build him a palace. David repulsed two invasions by the Philistines, who were jealous of his growing power (2 Sam. 5).

David resolved to transfer the ark to Jerusalem, and thus make the city the religious center as well as the political capital of Israel. His first attempt failed, because the precious symbol of Jehovah's presence was handled irreverently. A little later he brought the ark into the city of David with joyous shouting and blowing of trumpets. He offered sacrifices before the ark, and distributed presents of food to the assembled multitude. The king led the rejoicing procession, as the ark was brought into the city, leaping and dancing for joy (2 Sam. 6). Psalm 24 was probably sung as the ark came to the gates of the ancient city. The first six verses were probably sung as the procession drew near to the city. At the gates a single voice or a chorus sang:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors:
And the King of glory will come in."

A voice from within responds to the challenge:

"Who is the King of glory?"

The chorus without shouts back:

"Jehovah strong and mighty,
Jehovah mighty in battle."

This is all repeated before the gates swing open to admit the symbol of the King's presence.

David had many wars with the peoples surrounding the land of Israel, in all of which he was victorious. He first conquered the Philistines, who had been Israel's most stubborn foes for at least a century. He then subdued the peoples east of the Dead Sea and the Jordan. His fiercest struggle was with the Arameans or Syrians, northeast of Israel; but he finally tamed them effectually. Edom was also subdued after a bloody war (2 Sam. 8). Psalm 18, one of the greatest of the Psalms, celebrates the help of Jehovah against all foes.

As soon as David was firmly established on his throne, he expressed to the prophet Nathan a desire to build for Jehovah a temple. His pious desire pleased Jehovah so much that He sent Nathan with the great promise that David's throne should be established forever (2 Sam. 7). During all of David's later life he was collecting materials for the great temple to be erected by his son.

The promise that David's throne should stand forever was really Messianic, receiving its fulfillment in the reign of One who was David's son and at the same time his Lord. Psalm 110 describes the victory of this Priest-King, who marches against His foes at the head of an army of volunteers. Jehovah at His right hand beats down all who oppose His reign. Psalm 2 is a companion song, announcing the stability of Messiah's throne, though earth's puny kings attempt to throw off His rule.

David could never forget Jonathan, the best friend he ever had. For Jonathan's sake, he invited the poor cripple, Mephibosheth, to sit at the king's table as an honored guest continually (2 Sam. 9).

A fool came to the throne of the children of Ammon. He insulted David's messengers, who were sent on a peaceful errand, and thus brought on a war with Israel. David had now been on the throne for years. He was perhaps fifty years of age. Jehovah had blessed him

on every hand, so that he seemingly had all that heart could wish. But luxury and idleness had undermined the moral and religious nature of the great ruler. He was beginning to degenerate into an Oriental despot (2 Sam. 10:1 to 11:1).

92. DAVID'S GREAT SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

David's love of ease led him to stay at home to enjoy the pleasures of his palace while his brave soldiers, under Joab, went forth to fight their country's battles. Suddenly a great temptation presented itself, and David, in an evil moment, yielded. He perhaps thought the matter would never become public, and kings are not held accountable like other men. But his sin threatened to have consequences of which he had not dreamed. He at once set on foot a plan to cover up his sin; but the brave soldier whom he had wronged refused to enjoy the pleasures of home life while his comrades were in tents fighting for their country. In desperation, David resolved to put Uriah out of the way. He made the brave soldier the bearer of his own death-warrant. Under the walls of Rabbah, Uriah fell by the sword of the Ammonites; but Jehovah charged to David the blood of the man whom he had sent to his death. The God of Israel was displeased with David (2 Sam. 11).

How long David lived in terrible unrest, with a guilty conscience lashing him, we do not know. At length Nathan the prophet came to him with a story of cruelty that roused the king to vengeance. When the prophet turned upon him with the bold words, "Thou art the man," the king's head fell upon his breast with the confession, "I have sinned against Jehovah." God graciously forgave David's sin, so that he was not dethroned nor slain; but the natural consequences of his evil conduct were allowed to work themselves out in his after life (2 Sam. 12).

The ancient title of Psalm 51 represents it as David's cry for forgiveness for his horrible sins. It is the greatest of the seven Penitential Psalms. Read it in the light of its origin and note the depth of penitence. Many sinners, from the days of David to the present, have found these words the most satisfactory expression of their own desire for cleansing and a new heart.

Psalm 32 reflects David's experience at a slightly later period, when he had made a clean breast of all his sins, and the sense of forgiveness had come to gladden his soul. The contrast between the feverish unrest of the period in which he maintained a stubborn silence and the peace that came after full and frank confession receives striking expression in verses 3 to 5. David wishes others to learn the lesson of his experience (Psa. 32:6). He promises to teach transgressors the way back to God (Psa. 51:13).

David's sins repeated themselves in his own family. Inasmuch as he had given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, his later history must serve as a warning to all who might be tempted to imitate his evil deeds (2 Sam. 12:14). David must have felt that he was reaping what he had sown, when his eldest son gave the reins to unnatural lust, and when, a little later, another son put to death his guilty brother (2 Sam. 13). Absalom's rebellion was a further harvest from David's sowing (2 Sam. 14 to 20). David must have felt that he deserved the heavy chastisements that fell upon him in rapid succession.

Psalms 3, 4, 61, 62, and 63 were probably composed during the period of Absalom's rebellion. Psalms 41 and 55 probably refer to the treachery of Ahithophel and other secret foes at this crisis. Psalm 3 is a morning prayer (Psa. 3:5), and Psalm 4 is an evening prayer (Psa. 4:8), in both of which the psalmist's trust in God is beautifully expressed. The same note of confidence in God is struck repeatedly in Psalms 61 to 63.

After Absalom's rebellion David seems to have grown old rapidly. His heart was almost broken by his sad experience with an ungrateful son. He lost interest in life. For a brief moment he was roused out of his stupor by the news of Adonijah's effort to seize the throne, and gave his personal attention to the crowning of Solomon. He gave Solomon an earnest charge, and completed his preparations for the building of the temple (1 Kings 1: 1 to 2: 12; 1 Chr. 22 to 29).

93. GENERAL ESTIMATE OF DAVID

1. A born musician. Amos 6: 5.
2. A great lyric poet, the founder of Hebrew psalmody.
3. A superb general.
4. A successful organizer and administrator. Psalm 78: 70-72.
5. A man of remarkable religious experience. Though he fell into horrible sins, he recovered himself by repentance. To understand him fully we must study the history in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles in connection with the psalms composed by David.
6. David is a type of Christ, both as a persecuted man and as the king of Israel.

94. DAVID THE FOUNDER OF HEBREW PSALMODY

Many modern critics deny that David wrote any psalms. They brush aside as worthless the superscriptions or titles of the psalms, found in the Hebrew text and thence brought over into modern versions of the Psalter. But these titles, while not a part of the poetry, are very ancient; and they are in harmony with the uniform tradition that David composed many psalms. The question is one of such importance for the understanding of the history of revelation in Old Testament

times that we invite attention to some considerations which favor the view that David was the chief psalmist of Israel.

I. THE AGE OF DAVID FURNISHED PROMISING SOIL FOR THE GROWTH OF POETRY

1. The political and religious reforms of Samuel gave a new sense of national unity and kindled the fires of religious patriotism.

2. Music received an impetus from Samuel and the sons of the prophets, and was used in religious exercises.

3. The victories of war under David, and the consequent internal development of the national government and life of Israel, would naturally stimulate the poetic instinct of men of genius. Compare the Elizabethan age and the Victorian era in English literature.

4. The removal of the ark to the new capital and the organization of the Levitical choirs would stimulate poets to compose hymns of praise to Jehovah.

II. DAVID'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR COMPOSING PSALMS

1. He was a gifted *musician*. He had a sense of rhythm and an ear for pleasing sounds.

2. He is recognized by critics of all schools as a *poet* of no mean ability. The genuineness of his elegy over Saul and Jonathan is commonly accepted (2 Sam. 1: 19-27); also his lament over Abner (2 Sam. 3: 33f). In the elegy over Saul and Jonathan, David displays great generosity of soul, as well as poetic skill of the highest order. The poem confirms the representations of the author of Samuel as to David's kind treatment of Saul.

3. David was a man of *deep feeling and imperial imagination*. His successful generalship would argue for imagination, as well as his vivid imagery in the elegy. He was magnetic in the highest degree.

4. David was an *enthusiastic worshiper of Jehovah*. All the records of his life agree in representing him as devoted to Israel's God. We should have been surprised had no trace of religious poetry come from his pen. The known facts of his life and times prepare us for an outburst of psalmody under his leadership.

III. THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF ASCRIBING TO DAVID ANY OF THE HYMNS IN THE PSALTER REST UPON ASSUMPTIONS THAT ARE THOROUGHLY ANTIBIBLICAL

The Hebrews of all later ages unite in making David the chief psalmist of Israel. How did these traditions arise? How did the Chronicler come to regard David as the father of psalmody? If David actually wrote many psalms, all is plain; if not, it is difficult, if not impossible, to explain the origin of the view that he was Israel's greatest lyric poet.

95. PSALMODY AFTER DAVID

More than half of the psalms are ascribed to other writers than David, or else are anonymous. Solomon and Asaph and the Sons of Korah are credited with twenty-six psalms. Many reflect the period of the exile, and others were first sung after the return to the Holy Land. The Psalter probably contains some prayer or hymn from almost every crisis in the life of Israel, from the days of David to the time of Nehemiah. Some think that Psalms 44, 74, and 79 reflect the sufferings and persecutions of the Maccabean wars after 167 B.C. While this is doubtful, the Psalter certainly contains the prayers and praises of devout Israelites through six centuries or more.

96. TWO MORAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE PSALMS

I. ASSERTIONS OF INNOCENCE

See the following: 7:8; 17:1, 5; 18:20-24; 26:1-6; 44:17-22.

In explanation of such claims of innocence, note the following:

1. The psalmists are sure they are in the right as against those who persecute them. At least, they have committed no great sin, such as would call for severe punishment.

2. In some cases the psalmists confess their sinfulness in God's eyes, while, with their next breath, denying that they have wronged their bitter foes.

3. Such terms as *integrity*, *perfect*, *righteous*, etc., must be interpreted in accord with the context and general usage of the Old Testament times. They are freely used of any man whose heart is on God's side, even though occasionally he should fall into grievous sins.

II. IMPRECATIONS OR CURSES ON ENEMIES

Read Psalms 7, 35, 55, 56, 59, 68, 79, 83, 137. Note especially 69:22-28 and 109:6-20. Compare Jeremiah 18:18-23 and Nehemiah 4:4, 5. How ought we to regard these utterances of inspired writers? (a) Are they merely *predictions*, and not prayers? (b) Do they refer to *spiritual* foes? (c) Are the foes of the psalmists always *incorrigible enemies of God* and righteousness? Compare Psalms 7:14-16; 69:4; 109:16-18; Gal. 5:12. (d) Are they to be rejected by Christians as belonging to a time when *revenge* was not forbidden?

Now, as we know, the Old Testament repeatedly teaches the law of kindness. Ex. 23:4, 5; Lev. 19:17, 18; Job 31:29, 30. Moreover, the New Testament often

notes with pleasure the overthrow of the wicked. 1 Cor. 16:22; 2 Tim. 4:14; Rev. 6:9, 10; 16:5, 6; 18:20.

In order to understand the presence of such earnest prayers for the overthrow of enemies, it will be necessary for us to remind ourselves of several important facts:

1. We are dealing with *poetry*, and must allow the poet larger liberty in the vivid and dramatic expression of his thought.

2. We are interpreting the language of *Oriental*s.

- a. They are exceedingly fond of *hyperbole*, or rhetorical exaggeration.

- b. They have no taste for *abstract thought*. The psalmists conceived of sin as incarnate in the sinner; nor had they become accustomed to distinguish, as have we, between the sin and the sinner.

- c. The terrible curses pronounced on the family of the wicked men in Psalm 109 can only be properly understood, when one remembers the ancient oriental conception of the *solidarity of the family*. The doctrine of *individualism*, though recognized in the Pentateuch, is first emphasized by the later prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It permeates the entire New Testament.

3. We should not forget that the heaviest imprecations are found in the Psalms ascribed to David. It is manifest from the history in Samuel that David was not a cruel, revengeful man, but that he showed marked self-control and a spirit of forgiveness. As the ruler of Israel, it was his duty to cut off wicked men among his own people, and to defend the chosen nation against the aggression of the surrounding nations. If it was his duty literally to use the sword, might he not also pray for success in destroying incorrigible foes? Compare Stonewall Jackson, the Christian soldier.

4. It is but fair that we should remember, too, that we are yet in the twilight of Old Testament revelation,

and not in the noonday splendor of the revelation made by God's own Son. We cannot expect David, even when inspired, to display so high a knowledge of God's forgiveness as we now have in the light of our Saviour's character and teachings. The Old Testament did not attain finality in the matter of polygamy and divorce. May not David's knowledge be below the New Testament standard in respect to love to enemies?

In this connection we should remember that many expressions in the Psalms concerning the destruction of enemies have an added severity for the Christian reader, who is liable to forget that "blotting out of the Book of Life" means far more for us than it did for David, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments having been greatly extended by the New Testament.

We may at least learn from these imprecations that it is our duty not only to love righteousness, but to hate sin. We should be extremely careful never to use them in a manner inconsistent with the precepts or the example of the Lord Jesus.

97. THE DOCTRINE OF A FUTURE LIFE IN THE PSALMS

The future life was to the Old Testament saints practically an unexplored country. Sheol, the place of departed souls, was a vague, shadowy region. In moments of depression, they even wondered whether there was any such life. Even now men often ask, "Does death end all?" Most of our knowledge of the future life comes from the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles. Cf. John 14, and a hundred other passages in the New Testament.

In moments of exaltation, some of the Old Testament saints assert earnestly that their communion with God shall never be broken by death. Pss. 49:15; 73:23-26. If these classic proofs of the existence of faith in a life beyond the grave stood alone in the Old Testament, they

would still be sufficient to show that such a faith had taken root in Israel's life.

The Psalter, in common with the other Books of the Old Testament, sounds two different notes with regard to the future life; one a note of doubt or fear, the other a note of hope and sublime assurance.

1. Expressions that seem to oppose the doctrine: 6:5; 30:9; 39:13; 88:10-12; 115:17.

A careful examination will reveal the fact that most of these passages are *questions* rather than affirmations. Men wondered what light and joy could come to the departed in Sheol. They praised life in this world, in contrast with the unexplored land of the shades.

Moreover, the speakers are often men looking on the dark side of things and giving utterance to human fears natural in seasons of depression. The same persons, in calmer or more hopeful hours, voice their belief in a future life. Job 19:25-27; Eccl. 12:7, 14.

2. Expressions clearly foreshadowing the Christian doctrine of the future life: 16:10, 11; 17:15; 23:6; 49:15; 73:23-26. The future life of man is more clearly described here than anywhere else in the Old Testament. Compare Gen. 5:24; Ex. 3:6; 2 Kings 2:11; Job 19:25-27; Eccl. 12:7; Isaiah 26:19; Dan. 12:2, 3.

Belief in a future life was a doctrine firmly held in ancient Egypt and Babylonia. Moses and the other Old Testament writers use it far less as a motive to right living than did Jesus and the Apostles. It seems to have been reserved for the Son of God to reveal to men heaven and hell in their fullness of blessedness or of woe. He could describe the Father's house better than any mere prophet. But the passages cited above show clearly that in moments of exaltation the Old Testament saints had a full assurance of a life of communion with God beyond the grave.

98. THE GOSPEL IN THE PSALMS

The Christian discovers in the Psalms a religious life such as he would wish to lead. He longs to enter into the close fellowship with God attained by the ancient psalmists. These saints of olden time knew how to approach God with reverence and godly fear. They combined dignity and fervor in their worship.

(1) The Hebrew title for the Psalms is "Book of Praises." When we consider the fact that more than twenty of these poems have for their keynote *praise*, and that there are outbursts of thanksgiving in many others, the fitness of the Hebrew title dawns upon us. For the benefit of the diligent student, we give a list of the Psalms of Praise: 47, 66, 67, 96, 98, 100, 103, 107, 113, 117, 118, 134 to 136, 138, 145 to 150. Note the marvelous variety with which the singers describe the goodness and the glory of God. Here is a rich vocabulary of praise for stammering lips. Psalm 103, in its call to praise, unites the tender notes of the flute with the ringing notes of the trumpet. Shall we not also try to get into the spirit of Psalm 145, which has been called the *Te Deum* of the Old Testament? Ker says: "The Jews were accustomed to say that he who could pray this Psalm from the heart three times daily was preparing himself best for the praises of the world to come."

(2) The psalmists had great *joy in the house of Jehovah*. Psalms 84 and 122 give beautiful expression to the delight of the Old Testament believer in the temple worship. The chief attraction of the temple was the presence of Jehovah in His sanctuary. David expresses this longing for the vision of God's face in Psalm 27:

"One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that I will seek after;
That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days
of my life,

To behold the beauty of Jehovah,
And to inquire in His temple."

(3) The psalmist also *loved God's Word*. Psalms 19 and 119 give expression to this joy in the Bible of their day. Martin Luther's life was full of dangers and conflicts with men and demons. He was sometimes brought very low in body and in mind. Written on his Bible in his own hand are the words of Psalm 119:92:

"Unless thy law had been my delight,
I should have perished in mine affliction."

(4) The Old Testament saints "*practiced the presence of God*." Psalms 91 and 23 picture Jehovah and the saint in loving fellowship. The saint is with his Shepherd and Protector in bright days and in dark days, in joy and in sorrow, in danger and in quiet hours.

(5) The inspired poets of Israel saw *God's glory in nature*. See especially Psalm 19, in which the heavens are telling the glory of God; Psalm 29, the Song of the Storm; and Psalm 104, appropriately called "Hymn of Creation."

(6) *God's care of all things* finds beautiful expression in Psalms 8, 65, and 121. "The river of God is full of water" (Psa. 65:9). His resources are without limit and always available for His saints. He never slumbers nor takes a vacation.

(7) *The soul's thirst for God* and its delight in His protecting presence have found classic expression in the Psalter:

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God."

Psa. 42:1.

The longing of the human soul after God, as voiced in Psalms 42, 43, and 63, may seem to cold Western

readers unnatural in its fervor; but the fault is with us, and not with the psalmists.

(8) The figure of *taking refuge in God* is quite common in the Psalter. Psalms 46, 61, and 62 exalt God as the refuge of His saints.

“God is for us a place of refuge and a stronghold,
A help in troubles exceedingly findable.”
(Psa. 46:1.)

“Only He is my rock and my salvation,
My high tower; I shall not be moved.”
(Psa. 62:6.)

(9) We have space for only one other topic—Sin and Forgiveness. The seven Penitential Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) admit us to the heart of experimental religion in the Old Testament times. What a keen sense of sin! What depth of penitence! What earnestness in seeking forgiveness! Of the seven, Psalm 51 is the greatest. One might justly term this prayer of the penitent the holy of holies of the Psalter; for, with these earnest words on their lips, many wanderers have come back to God. The ritual law, as we have already seen, made no provision for atonement in the case of sins done with a high hand; but there was forgiveness, even for adultery and murder, when the sinner came to God with a broken spirit and a crushed heart (Psa. 51:17).

99. AN INSPIRED PRAYER-BOOK AND HYMNAL

Every Christian ought to know this prayer-book well; for it was given by inspiration. It contains model prayers, meditations, songs and benedictions. Confession, complaint, petition, thanksgiving, aspiration—all the soul's emotions find a voice in the Psalms. The Psalter is a book for the culture of the heart, a book

with which to deepen one's friendship with God. If one wishes to learn how to approach God acceptably in worship, this is the best manual to put into his hands. We cannot estimate too highly the influence of this book in winning men to God. Penitents have come seeking forgiveness with the words of the 51st Psalm; the forgiven have voiced their joy in words taken from the 32nd; the trusting have pillowed their heads on the 23rd; and the grateful have poured forth their praises through the 103rd. Perowne has well said: "No single book of Scripture, not even of the New Testament, has, perhaps, ever taken such hold on the *heart* of Christendom. None, if we may dare judge, unless it be the Gospels, has had so large an influence in moulding the affections, sustaining the hopes, purifying the faith of believers." Luther spoke of the Psalter as "a Bible in miniature."

Chapter VIII

SOLOMON AND THE PROVERBS

THE era of David and Solomon was the golden age of the Hebrew monarchy. The religious and political revival under Samuel led to a new sense of national unity in Israel. Saul at first advanced the political power of Israel by his victories in battle; but he presently became self-willed and disobedient, and Israel's glory faded before the rising power of the Philistines. David, who was Israel's greatest general, smote his foes hip and thigh, and beat down all opposition on every side. He conquered and organized a respectable empire. The weakness of Egypt and Assyria in his day gave him his opportunity, and he was prompt to seize it. David bequeathed to Solomon a rich and well-organized kingdom.

100. PROMISING BEGINNINGS OF SOLOMON'S REIGN

Solomon, in the early part of his reign, removed four men who might have endangered his throne. Adonijah was slain for his ambition. Abiathar, who had taken the side of Adonijah, was deposed from the priesthood, and sent away to his home at Anathoth. Joab was put to death for all his crimes; and Shimei was slain for disobedience (1 Kings 2).

Solomon's interest in religion was shown by the great sacrifice which he offered at Gibeon. Jehovah appeared to the young king in a dream by night, and said, "Ask what I shall give thee." Solomon's request for wisdom in judging the people greatly pleased Jehovah, and He promised to do all that Solomon asked and much more besides (1 Kings 3:1-15).

The young king's skill in judging was put to the test by two women. By a clever stratagem, he discovered the real mother of the babe over which the two women were contending (1 Kings 3:16-28). Men came to stand in awe before such a discerning judge; "for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do justice."

101. SOLOMON'S GROWING PROSPERITY

Solomon inherited a great kingdom. David had broken the power of all the hostile peoples around the land of Israel. Moab and Edom and Ammon and Syria paid tribute to Solomon, as they had done to David. Tyre cultivated friendly relations with both David and Solomon, providing materials for the new buildings in Jerusalem and skilled architects and artisans to erect them. Solomon put the Canaanites in his dominions to task-work. He also perfected the organization for the collection of taxes from his own people. He maintained a wise and strong administration of the internal affairs of the kingdom. He chose able officers of state. His fame as a wise man spread far and wide, so that men came from other nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon. "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon" (1 Kings 4, 5).

102. SOLOMON'S BUILDING OPERATIONS

David had collected much costly material for the building of the temple. Solomon added to this, and employed the best artists and artisans of Tyre to superintend the work. Only the choicest materials were used in the edifice. The work having been completed in seven years and a half, Solomon assembled the elders of Israel at Jerusalem for the formal dedication. The priests brought the ark of the covenant out of the Tent which

David had pitched into the most holy place of the Temple. At once the cloud of glory filled the house of Jehovah. Solomon then stood before the altar of Jehovah in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven, and prayed Jehovah to cause His name to dwell in the house he had built for Him. He asked Jehovah to hear every prayer directed toward the Temple. Solomon followed his prayer of dedication with elaborate sacrifices. All Israel rejoiced greatly over the completion of the Temple. It was a time of great prosperity and joy for all the people (1 Kings 6 to 8). While David did much to make Jerusalem the Holy City, Solomon added to its glory by erecting the beautiful edifice, which would henceforth be the center of Israel's religious life. Pious souls longed for the privilege of worshiping in Jehovah's house in Jerusalem. Pilgrims poured into the Holy City at the great annual feasts.

Solomon also built for himself a magnificent palace. Jerusalem became more and more the center of Israel's life. The king also fortified other cities throughout his realm. Having put the Amorites and other tribes of Canaan to forced labor, Solomon was able to carry on these elaborate building operations. He also built a fleet of ships to trade in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. Commerce with foreign lands filled Solomon's coffers with gold. The trade between Egypt and Asia Minor flowed through Israel. Kings and queens came great distances to see the glory of Solomon and to hear his wisdom. Israel's historians and poets describe Solomon's era as the golden age of prosperity and peace (1 Kings 9, 10).

103. THE DECLINE OF SOLOMON

Solomon's great mistake was the formation of an extensive harem. He imitated the oriental despots in col-

lecting a great number of wives and concubines, many of whom were foreigners. "And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings 11:3). Solomon built heathen sanctuaries in which his foreign wives could worship their gods. East of the temple hill, and in full view from Jehovah's sanctuary, rose columns of incense to cruel Molech and lascivious Ashtoreth. We are not surprised to read that Jehovah was angry with Solomon. He raised up adversaries to vex Solomon in his old age, and announced the secession of ten tribes from the rule of Solomon's son. Jeroboam received the promise of a throne in northern Israel (1 Kings 11). Solomon's decline is a sad commentary on human wisdom: the wisest man of his time played the fool, and left the world under a cloud. We have reason to believe that the pleasure-loving Solomon was not finally cast off by Jehovah like the willful, rebellious Saul.

104. SOLOMON AS AN AUTHOR

Three books in the Old Testament are commonly ascribed to Solomon,—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. As to Ecclesiastes, there is almost unanimous agreement among modern scholars that the book was written toward the close of the Old Testament period. The lessons of Solomon's experience are gathered up by a later writer, who puts himself in Solomon's place and writes as if he were Solomon. He gives full vent to his scepticism and to the sense of disappointment with life. He preaches vigorously and fearlessly on the vanity of human life. "All is vanity and a feeding on wind." The book, however, comes to a sane and reverent conclusion: "Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

The Song of Songs is a collection of love songs, greatly admired by orientals for their beauty and chasteness.

To our western taste they seem too fervid, and enter too much into the description of physical charms. Many devout souls in Christian history have interpreted the book as referring to the mutual love of Christ and the Church. Recent scholars, for the most part, think that the book celebrates the strength and constancy of human love. On this view, Solomon tries in vain to win the love of a beautiful girl, who remains true to her shepherd lover. If this view is correct, we have in the Bible a book in praise of the strong, sweet love between man and woman, a love on which the home is built. It would be fitting that such love should receive recognition in God's Word.

While the traditional view as to the authorship of Ecclesiastes and of the Song of Songs has been set aside by recent criticism, it is still generally recognized that Solomon's name is correctly associated with the Book of Proverbs, as the most brilliant proverb-maker of the ages. There is wide difference of opinion as to the parts of the book to be credited to Solomon. Chapters 30 and 31 are expressly ascribed to Agur and King Lemuel, and Proverbs 22:17 to 24:34 is anonymous, being described as "the words of the wise men." The large collection of brief proverbs in Proverbs 10:1 to 22:16 is expressly ascribed to Solomon; also the group in Proverbs 25 to 29, said to have been copied out by the men of Hezekiah. There remains the magnificent section on Wisdom in chapters 1 to 9. Fortunately we do not need to know the author of a wise saying in order to appreciate its beauty and accept it as a guide to conduct. The tendency in recent criticism of the Bible is to reduce every book to fragments and to multiply unduly imaginary authors and editors. Common sense will continue to discount the claims of an over-confident criticism. Solomon's wisdom forms the core of the Book of Proverbs, just as David's psalms are the crown of the Psalter.

105. A BUSINESS MANUAL FOR YOUNG MEN

While the Book of Proverbs offers increase in learning to the wise man, its chief aim is "to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion" (Prov. 1:1-6). It is a business manual to guide young men to success in life. Its constant appeal is to young men. The author does not indulge in speculative thought, but gives his attention to practical life. Whatever will stimulate young men to honesty and industry and purity he gladly uses. How to make the best of life is the problem in which the Old Testament sages took the keenest interest. Although the Book of Proverbs as a whole is intended to be a manual for young men, the closing chapter paints the portrait of the ideal Hebrew matron. In general, the position of woman in Proverbs is high, and her power for good or ill in the home and in society is fully recognized.

106. WISDOM AND FOLLY CONTRASTED

The first nine chapters of the book introduce the young man to two women who seek to win his confidence and affection,—Wisdom and Folly. Much of the language of these chapters is put into the mouth of Wisdom.

The author recommends religion as the foundation for a successful life: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7). Dr. Toy well says: "The thought of the greater part of the Book is definitely religious, standing in sympathetic and reverent contact with the conception of a just and wise divine government of the world. The sages are independent thinkers, but refer their wisdom ultimately to God."

After an earnest warning against joining a band of robbers, the author introduces Wisdom as making her appeal to the simple: she will mock when calamity overtakes those who reject her reproof (Prov. 1). If a

young man will earnestly seek Wisdom, he shall know God and righteousness, and be preserved from wicked men and from the strange woman (Prov. 2). In his relation to God, let the young man trust in, honor, and submit to Jehovah (3:1-12). Happy the man that finds Wisdom (3:13-26). In his relations to his fellows, let the wise man avoid stinginess, treachery, contentiousness, violence, and the like (3:27-35). Wisdom is the principal thing. Let the young man avoid the path of the wicked and walk straight forward in Wisdom's way, guarding his heart above all else (Prov. 4). Shun the strange woman (Prov. 5:1-23; 6:20 to 7:27; 9:13-18).

"Her house is the way to Sheol,
Going down to the chambers of death."

The author inveighs against security debts, laziness, and sowing discord (6:1-19). He personifies Wisdom, and pictures her as appealing to men to receive her instruction. Wisdom is attractive, and her fruit is better than gold. She was present with Jehovah at the creation. Happy the man that seeks and finds Wisdom (Prov. 8). Wisdom and Folly both invite the young man to a feast. The harlot Folly says to the young man,

"Stolen waters are sweet,
And bread eaten in secret is pleasant."

This is the language of the vile woman, and ought not to be lightly used by decent persons.

There is no book better than *Proverbs* for the teaching of personal purity. Vice is pictured clearly, without being made attractive. Sweet home life is exalted, and impurity is seen to be dangerous and damnable.

107. STRIKING ETHICAL AND SOCIAL TEACHINGS

After the connected discourse in the first nine chapters, the book is composed of brief proverbs on a great variety of subjects. The attentive reader will discover here and there groups of sayings dealing with a common topic. Thus in 12:13-23 most of the proverbs refer to human speech, in 26:1-12 to the fool, in 26:13-16 to the sluggard, and 26:17-28 to the mischief-maker. It is a profitable exercise to go through the book and collect all the proverbs dealing with a given topic.

(1) *Industry* and its opposite, *laziness*, receive frequent mention in this manual for young men. The wise man prods the sluggard with such goads as the following:

“As the door turneth upon its hinges,
So doth the sluggard upon his bed.
The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish;
It wearieth him to bring it again to his mouth.”
(Prov. 26:14, 15.)

“The sluggard saith, There is a lion without:
I shall be slain in the streets.”
(Prov. 22:13.)

“Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty;
Open thine eyes, and thou shall be satisfied with bread.”
(Prov. 20:13.)

“He also that is slack in his work
Is brother to him that is a destroyer.”
(Prov. 18:9.)

Such ringing words are like the sting of a whip-cracker to a lazy ox. See also the classic picture of the sluggard in Proverbs 24:30-34, and the proverbs found in 12:11, 24, 27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:19; 16:26; 19:

15, 24; 20:4; 21:5, 25; 22:29; 26:13-16; 27:23-27; 31:27.

(2) The good and evil uses of the *tongue* are the subjects of many proverbs. Let the student make a list for himself of the proverbs that refer to human speech, putting on one sheet all references to speech as good and helpful, and on another all uses that are harmful. We call attention to a few only of the many striking sayings concerning the tongue:

"A soft answer turneth away wrath;
But a grievous word stirreth up anger."
(Prov. 15:1.)

"A perverse man scattereth abroad strife;
And a whisperer separateth chief friends."
(Prov. 16:28.)

"The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water;
Therefore leave off contention, before there is quar-
reling."
(Prov. 17:14.)

"It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife;
But every fool will be quarreling."
(Prov. 20:3.)

"It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop,
Than with a contentious woman in a wide house."
(Prov. 21:9.)

"A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth;
And a word in due season, how good is it!"
(Prov. 15:23.)

"A word fitly spoken
Is like apples of gold in network of silver."
(Prov. 25:11.)

"He kisseth the lips
Who giveth a right answer."
(Prov. 24:26.)

(3) The wise man gives much sound counsel as to the conduct of one's business. He warns the young man against standing as *surety* for other men's debts (Prov. 6:1-5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13). The book has been criticized by some as teaching selfishness in these warnings against security debts; but the history of security debts, if it could be written fully and frankly, would vindicate the wisdom of the Hebrew sage. It is a beneficent provision of the modern business world that guaranty companies will now, for a reasonable consideration, go on the bonds of all officials, thus relieving their personal friends of the heavy burden. This principle ought to be extended to loans in bank, and any man ought to be willing to pay a company for its endorsement. It is just as dangerous and foolish for a man to let another trade on his credit now, as it was in the days of Solomon. We ought to lend and give freely; but it is not wise to go on another man's paper. Sooner or later the indorser will smart for it.

(4) The warnings against *wine* are often quoted:

"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler;
And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise."
(Prov. 20:1.)

"Look not thou upon the wine when it is red,
When it sparkleth in the cup,
When it goeth down smoothly:
At the last it biteth like a serpent,
And stingeth like an adder."
(Prov. 23:31, 32.)

(5) The Book of Proverbs exalts true *friendship*:

"A friend loveth at all times;
And is born as a brother for adversity."
(Prov. 17:17.)

"He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction ;

But there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."
(Prov. 18:24.)

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend ;

But the kisses of an enemy are profuse."
(Prov. 27:6.)

For additional proverbs on friendship, see 27:9, 10, 14, 17. The wise man taught that a man can have only a few real friends; if he tries to form intimacies on every hand, it will be to his own undoing. A true friend is one of God's noblest gifts.

The wise man does not hesitate to employ riddles and conundrums, if they will convey his message (Prov. 1:6; 30:15-31). God uses all methods of approach to a man's mind and heart, that He may lead him to a higher ethical and spiritual life.

The Christian student can learn much from the Book of Proverbs as to the wise conduct of his life in business and in society. The New Testament writers make about twenty quotations from this book of practical precepts. As a further encouragement to the student to make himself familiar with its teaching, we quote the testimony of Professor C. H. Toy, one of the most learned commentators on Proverbs: "The high ethical standard of the Book is universally recognized. Its maxims all look to the establishment of a safe, peaceful, happy social life, in the family and the community; the supposed exceptions, cases of alleged selfish prudence (as, for example, the caution against giving security), are only apparent, since proper regard for self is an element of justice."

Chapter IX

THE EARLY KINGS AND PROPHETS

108. INTRODUCTORY

AFTER the death of Solomon (931 B.C.), his son Rehoboam faced a crisis. The people asked that the burdens imposed upon them by Solomon be made lighter. Discontent was widespread among the northern tribes, who found in Jeroboam the son of Nebat a capable leader. When Rehoboam followed the counsel of the younger men, who advised him to lord it over the people and treat them as slaves, all the tribes except Judah and Benjamin openly revolted and chose Jeroboam as their king. From 931 B.C. to 722 B.C. the two kingdoms existed side by side, sometimes in friendly alliance, but often at war with each other. In 722 B.C. the Northern Kingdom fell before the mighty Assyrians, and the people of Samaria were swept into exile. The Kingdom of Judah continued until 587 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and carried the people captive to Babylon.

109. GLIMPSES OF ISRAEL'S EARLY KINGS

Let us first take a rapid survey of the history of the Kingdom of Israel or Ephraim. Jeroboam I. was not a deeply religious man. He was a warrior and a politician. It seemed to him unwise to let his subjects go to Jerusalem to worship in the Temple, lest the king of Judah might win them back to their allegiance to the house of David. Hence Jeroboam set up golden calves at Bethel

near his southern border and at Dan in the far north, and invited his people to worship Jehovah through these images. He changed the time of the feast of Tabernacles from the seventh to the eighth month, and allowed anybody who wished to do so to become priests before the golden calves. He thus lost the support of the Levites, who flocked to Jerusalem in great numbers; and the prophets denounced the calf worship as a sin. An unnamed prophet from Judah thundered against Jeroboam's altar; and Ahijah, the prophet who had promised to Jeroboam the rule over ten tribes, in his old age predicted the complete rejection of Jeroboam and his house (I Kings 12 to 14). His son Nadab reigned two short years, when he was assassinated by Baasha.

Baasha fought against Asa of Judah, in a vain attempt to stop the exodus of religious people out of Israel into Judah, where a great revival was in progress. Asa hired Benhadad of Damascus to attack Baasha in the rear. Baasha at once gave up his attempt to build a city that would enable him to threaten Judah. Baasha's son was assassinated after a reign of only two years (I Kings 15:25 to 16:14).

The assassin Zimri lived only seven days to enjoy the fruits of his treason. He was succeeded by Omri, the founder of a new dynasty. Omri chose a new site for his capital, showing the eye of a trained soldier in his selection of a strong hill surrounded by a valley. Samaria resisted many sieges. It took the trained engineers of Assyria over two years to force their way into the fortress.

Omri also strengthened himself politically by securing for his son Ahab the hand of Jezebel, a princess of Zidon. This marriage, which seemed to Omri a happy diplomatic stroke, precipitated a religious struggle which shook Israel from center to circumference. Ahab was a brave general; but he cared little for the religion of his fathers. When Jezebel decided to change the religion of Israel, importing the prophets of Baal and the priests of Astarte to teach

Israel the religious rites and customs of Zidon, Ahab made no objection. Jezebel ruled him by her superior intelligence and iron will. When the prophets of Jehovah thundered against the foreign teachers and their patron, Jezebel replied with the sword. They were hunted down by her cruel soldiers. Soon all open opposition to the queen's program ceased. It seemed that she had supplanted the religion of Jehovah by the religion of Baal and Astarte. Her high-handed methods stirred the soul of a mountaineer in Gilead, and Elijah stepped forth as the champion of Jehovah to engage in combat with the champion of heathenism (I Kings 16).

110. ELIJAH THE PROPHET

Had there been no Jezebel, there had been no need for an Elijah. Jehovah could not afford to let a heathen princess uproot His worship from Israel. His answer to her challenge was the mission of Elijah.

The prophet was perhaps now a man in the prime of his powers. For months he had been engaged in anxious thought and earnest prayer, as the news of Jezebel's campaign against Jehovah and His religion came to him in his mountain home. He began to pray that it might not rain on the land given up to idolatry. As he prayed, there came to him the conviction that he must go forth as Jehovah's representative to fight the forces of Baal. Jehovah gave to His servant the keys with which to lock the heavens, so that no rain nor dew should fall upon the sinful land.

Elijah's first appearance before Ahab was sudden and unannounced, and the message was startling: "As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Every word weighed a pound. The prophet's departure was as sudden as his coming; for the Lord bade him to hide.

Elijah took refuge by the brook Cherith, probably east of the Jordan. Here he was put in training for his future task. His food was provided in a miraculous way, but his water supply was dependent upon the brook, which gradually dwindled away, until no water was left. He was thus thrown back upon faith in Jehovah.

Now the command comes to go to Zarephath, a town near Jezebel's home in Zidon, and to take refuge with a widow. This was another test of the prophet's faith. It looked like putting one's head into the mouth of the lioness. But the prophet's faith stood the strain, and soon he was the guest of the widow, who literally divided her last crust with the prophet of Jehovah. Day by day their food was supplied. This sojourn in the home at Zarephath was a part of Elijah's discipline for his later tasks. One day a great shock came to the widow and her guest, when her son breathed his last in her arms. Elijah's heart was touched; for he had learned to love the lad, and the widow's grief was piteous to behold. Taking the boy in his arms, he strode up the stairway to his own room, and laying the lad on his own couch, Elijah prayed Jehovah to let the soul of the child come into him again. Three times he prayed and stretched himself on the lad. Jehovah heard the prophet's prayer and restored the boy to life. Taking up the lad in his strong arms, the prophet stalked down the stairs into the family room and presented him alive to his mother. The good woman came into a larger and richer knowledge of God through her great trial (I Kings 17).

111. THE TEST ON MOUNT CARMEL

After three years and a half, Elijah is commanded to show himself a second time to Ahab. On the way he meets Obadiah, prime minister at the court of Ahab and Jezebel, and yet a devout worshiper of Jehovah. Elijah

was great enough to recognize in Obadiah a fellow servant of the God of Israel, though he could not have held his office at court for a single day.

As soon as Ahab heard of Elijah's approach, he drove rapidly to meet him. When he drew near to the prophet, he called aloud, "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" Perhaps he thought that Elijah would show signs of fear. If so, he was badly mistaken; for Elijah charges upon the king and the court the sins that have brought calamity upon the land. He directs the king to assemble the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of the Asherah to Mount Carmel. What could Ahab do in the presence of a man who carried the keys of the heavens? He at once sent messengers to assemble the prophets on Mount Carmel.

Elijah had a strenuous day on Mount Carmel. He first made an address to the people, urging them to quit limping between two sides, and to come out openly either for Jehovah or for Baal. He then challenges the prophets of Baal to a contest by fire. The people say that the test is fair, and the prophets of Baal are forced to show what their god can do. Elijah watches them closely, lest they slip fire under the wood on the altar. After a while he mocks them and their god. At length, he builds an altar to Jehovah, and calls down fire from heaven. Before the heathen prophets can slip away, he orders that they be arrested and put to death at the foot of the mountain. It only remains to bring down rain upon the thirsty earth; so Elijah goes to the top of the mountain to pray for rain. Seven times his servant goes to look, before he discovers a tiny cloud coming up from the sea. Elijah had been praying with all his soul for the coming of rain. As the storm gathers, Elijah girds up his loins and runs before Ahab's chariot all the way across the plain to Jezreel, sixteen miles away. As he bounded along he was thinking of the wonderful events of the day. It seemed

to him the greatest day in history. He had surpassed Moses and Joshua and Samuel. He felt himself to be better than his fathers (I Kings 18).

112. THE FLIGHT TO HOREB

No doubt he expected an invitation to spend the night in the king's palace. But when they entered Jezreel, Ahab rode to his palace, and Elijah was left in the streets. He was worn out by the exciting experiences of the day. Before he had time to rest and refresh himself, a messenger from the queen came to him with the threat that she would kill him before another day passed by. Elijah was limp and weak physically after the most exhausting day's work in all his life. He was also disappointed and chagrined that he should be neglected by the king. He felt that he deserved unique honors at the hands of his people. He was rudely awakened from his musings by the fierce queen's threat. He had no reserves to put in the battle. He made haste to get out of Jezreel before the city gates closed, and turning his face southward, he went for his life. At Beer-sheba he left his tired servant, and plunged on for another day into the wilderness. At length, exhausted, he sank under a juniper tree, and asked that he might die. A good angel brought bread and water to the faint and weary prophet. He was also refreshed by sleep. He finally reached Horeb, the mount from which Jehovah spoke to Moses and the fathers. Here he dwelt in a cave and went to school to the God of Israel.

What, then, did Elijah learn at this period?

(1) A lesson of *humility*: "I am no better than my fathers."

(2) A lesson of *courage*. Do not run until Jehovah commands it.

(3) A lesson in *gentleness*. Do not trust too much in violent means for promoting religion.

(4) A lesson in *patience* and *perseverance*. God knows better than we do when our work is finished.

(5) A lesson of *hopefulness*: "Yet will I leave me seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal." God has more servants than we sometimes imagine.

113. ELIJAH'S CLOSING MINISTRY

God sent Elijah back to call and train Elisha as his successor in the prophetic office. Elisha was not indolent, though living in the hot valley of the Jordan, and the son of a man in good circumstances financially; for he both plowed and superintended the work of many others. He gladly left home and farm to be the companion and helper of Elijah. Happy the pupil that has an Elijah for his teacher! Equally happy the teacher that has an Elisha for his pupil! For months, and possibly years, Elisha pours water on the hands of Elijah (1 Kings 19).

Ahab by divine aid won signal victories over the Syrians, but failed to follow them up (1 Kings 20). His treatment of Naboth brought Elijah to confront him at the very moment he was about to take possession of the vineyard of the man whom Jezebel had slain. Elijah's old-time fire and courage have returned. He predicts the bloody death of Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21).

Ahab made a league with Jehoshaphat of Judah against the Syrians of Damascus. Before going to battle pious Jehoshaphat insisted on consulting a prophet of Jehovah. He did not put much confidence in the four hundred prophets who encouraged Ahab to attack the Syrians. When Micaiah the son of Imlah was called into the presence of the two kings, he at first sarcastically repeated the encouraging words of the false prophets; but when Ahab insisted that he speak the truth, he announced the death of Ahab and the defeat of Israel in the approaching battle. The brave man was sent to prison for speaking

unwelcome truth. Evidently Elijah was not the only true prophet of Jehovah in Israel. Brave Micaiah is worthy to be remembered along with the great Elijah (1 Kings 22).

Ahab fell in battle at Ramoth-gilead, as Micaiah had foretold, and was succeeded by his son Ahaziah. When this wicked king fell from the second story of his palace and was sorely wounded, he sent messengers to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to inquire whether he would recover. Elijah planted himself squarely in front of the messengers, and sent them back to their master with the announcement that he should certainly die. When the king tried to arrest Elijah, fire came down and devoured the first two captains and their men. The third was more respectful to Jehovah's prophet. With him Elijah went into the palace and repeated the prediction that Ahaziah would not recover (2 Kings 1).

It was probably in the early part of the reign of Jehoram of Israel that Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha kept close to his teacher all that last day, knowing that he would not long be permitted to enjoy his instruction. He longed greatly to be Elijah's successor, and God granted his request. He returned to the Jordan, after the ascension of Elijah, with Elijah's mantle, and the waters parted for him as they had done for his great teacher.

114. ELISHA'S WORDS AND WORKS

The sons of the prophets recognized Elisha as the successor of Elijah, and bowed before him as their instructor and leader. Elisha was clothed with power by the Spirit to work many miracles. While most of his miracles were works of mercy, in at least two instances he meted out justice to offenders. When the lads mocked him he pronounced a curse upon them, and two she-bears tore forty-two of the irreverent lads (2 Kings 2:23-25);

and Gehazi was stricken with leprosy as a punishment for lying and covetousness (2 Kings 5:20-27).

The following miracles of mercy were wrought by Elisha:

(1) Healing the spring at Jericho by casting in salt (2 Kings 2:19-22).

(2) Supplying the allied armies of Israel, Judah, and Edom with water (2 Kings 3).

(3) Supplying oil to the widow for the redemption of her sons (2 Kings 4:1-7).

(4) Raising from the dead the son of the Shunammite (2 Kings 4:8-37).

(5) Removing the bitter taste from the pottage (2 Kings 4:38-41).

(6) Multiplying the loaves for the people (2 Kings 4:42-44).

(7) Healing Naaman's leprosy (2 Kings 5).

(8) Making the ax to swim (2 Kings 6:1-7).

(9) Leading the Syrians into Samaria and sending them away kindly (2 Kings 6:8-23).

Elisha also made the following predictions:

(1) Announcement of plenty in famished Samaria (2 Kings 6:24 to 7:20).

(2) Warning the Shunammite of a seven-years' famine (2 Kings 8:1-6).

(3) Prediction of Hazael's cruelty to Israel (2 Kings 8:7-15).

(4) Interview with Jehoash, and announcement of victory over Syria (2 Kings 13:14-19).

115. JEHU DESTROYS THE HOUSE OF AHAB

The house of Omri and Ahab was blotted out by the fierce reformer Jehu. Elisha sent a young prophet into the army to anoint Jehu as king. With his own hands Jehu slew Joram, the last king of Ahab's line. He also trampled Jezebel under foot as he drove into

Jezreel (2 Kings 9). Jehu destroyed all the sons of Ahab, and also slew all the worshipers of Baal; but he retained the golden calves set up by Jeroboam the son of Nebat. In his days the Syrians under Hazael made serious inroads upon Israel, especially east of the Jordan (2 Kings 10). Under his son and successor Jehoahaz, Israel was brought low by the Syrians; but under Jehoash Israel regained its independence, as Elisha had predicted on his death-bed.

116. CONTRAST BETWEEN ELIJAH AND ELISHA

Elijah and Elisha were quite unlike in their personal history and in the character of their work. Elijah's home was in the mountains of Gilead; Elisha's in the hot Jordan valley. Elijah seems to have owned nothing but a mantle and girdle; Elisha was the son of a man who could send twelve plows to his field. Elijah was much alone, not being magnetic and companionable; Elisha was the trusted friend and counselor of kings, and the favorite guest of both rich and poor. Elijah was the avenger and destroyer; Elisha was the quiet statesman and religious teacher, his miracles being chiefly works of mercy. The words and deeds of Elijah remind us of John the Baptist; the miracles of Elisha point to the work of Jesus.

Still it remains true that Elijah is the greater character. He ranks with Enoch and with Moses. He was not, like John, a forerunner; for Elisha was merely his greatest disciple.

Before taking up Jeroboam II., with whose reign three of the Minor Prophets are associated, it will be well for us to turn back for a rapid survey of the history in Judah from the accession of Rehoboam in 931 B.C.

117. GLIMPSES OF JUDAH'S EARLY KINGS

Rehoboam played the fool more than once. For a few

years after the division of the kingdom he seems to have been comparatively faithful to Jehovah; but when he became strong, he forsook the law of Jehovah. Shishak invaded the land and plundered Jerusalem (2 Chron. 10 to 12). Rehoboam's son and successor, Abijah, was successful in battle against Israel (2 Chron. 13).

Asa, the third king of Judah, was contemporary with the first seven kings of Israel, coming to the throne in the twentieth year of Jeroboam I., and continuing to the fourth year of Ahab. He was victorious in battle with the Ethiopians and Egyptians (2 Chron. 14). Asa wrought reforms in Judah, and stirred up a revival. He made the mistake of forming a league with the heathen kingdom of Syria (2 Chron. 15, 16).

Jehoshaphat was a good king. His chief fault was his readiness to join in with men like Ahab on some fool's errand. Jehu the son of Hanani the seer rebuked him for his alliance with the wicked Ahab. Jehoshaphat improved the administration of justice among his people. He was wonderfully delivered from a great invasion of peoples from the east of the Dead Sea (2 Chron. 17 to 20).

Jehoshaphat made the mistake of taking Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, to be the wife of his son Jehoram. The names of Jehoram and Athaliah are blots on the pages of Judah's history. Jehoram's short reign was full of sins and of calamities. Men were glad when he was dead (2 Chron. 21).

118. THE PROPHECY OF OBADIAH

It is possible that the prophecy of Obadiah, which appears as fourth in the roll of the Minor Prophets, was delivered about the close of Jehoram's reign (845 B.C.). Many good scholars put it shortly after 587 B.C. On the whole, we prefer the early date, though fully aware of the strong case that can be made out for a date shortly

after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar.

Obadiah's message is directed against Edom. The proud Edomites need not fancy that they are unassailable in their lofty fastnesses. Jehovah will bring them down because of their violence and cruelty to Israel. They took part with Judah's enemies and helped on the calamity. Retribution shall certainly overtake them. Jehovah's people shall again enjoy prosperity in their own land. The most significant expression in the book is the closing affirmation, "and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's" (Obadiah 1 to 21).

119. A CRISIS IN JUDAH

After the death of Jehoram, Ahaziah began to reign. In less than a year he fell mortally wounded by Jehu's archers. His mother Athaliah slew all the seed royal, except the infant Joash, and seized the reins of government. Baal worship was introduced into Jerusalem and the temple was neglected. After six years of heathen domination, Judah enjoyed a gracious revival under the boy king Joash, who was guided by his benefactor, the aged high priest Jehoiada. As long as Jehoiada lived, Joash worshiped Jehovah and governed his people according to the law. During the minority of Joash (about 830 B.C.), when the high priest directed affairs in Judah, probably occurred the plague of locusts described by Joel.

120. THE PROPHECY OF JOEL

Joel was well acquainted with the priestly rites and sacrifices. He was at home in the Temple. This renders it probable that he lived in Jerusalem; and he may have been a priest.

The prophet first describes a double scourge of locusts and of drought. All classes are called upon to lament and mourn over the desolation of the land. The priests

are urged to sanctify a fast and call a solemn assembly of all classes in the house of Jehovah. The prophet himself cries to Jehovah on behalf of his suffering people (Joel 1).

The prophet describes the approaching "Day of Jehovah," under the figure of a yet more terrible scourge of locusts. Some think that the locusts are a figure for a great army of men about to invade Judah. Whether literal locusts or men, the scourge threatens to break in upon the land, and it is Jehovah who marshals the host. Hence the call to repentance. If Jehovah can be persuaded to withhold the scourge, the land will not be devastated. The call to repentance reveals Jehovah's mercy and the sort of repentance that is acceptable in His eyes: "yet even now, saith Jehovah, turn unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil" (Joel 2: 1-17).

Joel's message bore fruit. The repentance of the people must have been deep and thorough; for the prophet tells us: "Then was Jehovah jealous for His land, and had pity on His people" (Joel 2: 18). Jehovah promises both material and spiritual blessings. He will destroy the locusts and send seasonable rains, so that there shall be abundant pasturage, grain, and fruits (Joel 2: 19-27). He will also pour out His Spirit upon all classes (Joel 2: 28-32), a promise gloriously fulfilled at Pentecost (Acts 2: 14-21). Jehovah also promises to destroy all nations that oppress His people. He will be a refuge to Israel, and will dwell in Zion, His holy mountain (Joel 3).

Joel is one of the most deeply *spiritual* of all the prophets. We should naturally expect him to be *missionary* also in his outlook; but he describes the heathen only in their attitude of opposition to Jehovah's kingdom.

Isaiah and the later prophets will develop the missionary idea in all its glory. The prophet Jonah, about 800 B.C., shortly after Joel, according to our view, became a missionary to the capital of the heathen world.

121. FROM JOASH TO UZZIAH

King Joash repaired the temple of Jehovah. He seems to have taken greater interest in the work than the priests and Levites (2 Chron. 24:4-14). After the death of Jehoiada, Joash fell into idolatry and other sins. He even murdered the son of his great benefactor (2 Chron. 24:15-27).

Amaziah was an ambitious and vainglorious king. After conquering the Edomites, he was foolish enough to bring their gods to Jerusalem that he might worship them. He challenged Jehoash of Israel to battle. He was captured, and part of the wall of Jerusalem was broken down by Jehoash (2 Chron. 25).

Uzziah (or Azariah) was one of Judah's strongest kings. He was successful in war, and also built up the agricultural resources of Judah. He reopened the trade through the Red Sea. Toward the close of his reign he tried to usurp the functions of the priest and offer sacrifice in the temple. He was smitten with leprosy for his sacrilege (2 Chron. 26). "In the year that king Uzziah died," the greatest of the writing prophets received his call to be a prophet (Isa. 6:1).

122. THE REIGN OF JEROBOAM II

This is a good place to leave off the story of *Judah's* early kings and prophets. We return now to the story of *Israel's* prophets in the days of Jeroboam II. (790 to 750 B.C.).

In 2 Kings 14:25 we read of Jeroboam: "He restored

the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah, according to the word of Jehovah, the God of Israel, which He spake by His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gathhepher." Israel's borders were enlarged by Jeroboam so as to include the country from the entrance of Hamath, in the far north, to the Dead Sea, in the south. This era of prosperity had been foretold by the prophet Jonah. It was a privilege for the young prophet to announce to his countrymen the good times ahead. Jonah did not resist a call to the prophetic ministry. Patriot as he was, he rejoiced to bear Jehovah's message of cheer to his people. Jonah had almost certainly seen Elisha, and may possibly have sat at his feet in one of the prophetic schools. Happy in his ministry to Israel, he was one day startled by a command to go far hence to the Gentiles.

123. JONAH AN UNWILLING FOREIGN MISSIONARY

"Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me" (Jonah 1:1,2). Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah rose up to flee to the farthest known point in the opposite direction. Why did Jehovah's prophet behave thus? He himself tells us, as he complains because Jehovah had decided to spare Nineveh: "O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2). Jonah did not wish Nineveh to be spared, lest it devour Israel with open mouth. Jonah was an intense patriot, narrow-minded and exclusive in his devotion to Israel's welfare.

Jehovah taught Jonah a lesson through the gourd that

came up to protect him from the rays of the sun. As Jonah sat begging in anger that he might die because of the loss of the grateful shade of the vine, Jehovah said: "Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons (infants) that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" Let these closing words introduce us to the main lesson of the Book of Jonah. God cares enough for a heathen city to send to it a true prophet to warn its people of approaching destruction. He accepts the repentance of the heathen, just as He does that of His chosen people. If it was wrong in Jonah to refuse to bear the message of Israel's God to a foreign nation, it is even worse for us to refuse to carry the good news about Jesus to peoples sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

124. AMOS AN AGGRESSIVE HOME MISSIONARY

Jonah probably prophesied about 800 B.C., just prior to Jeroboam's accession to the throne of Israel (or Ephraim). When Jeroboam's prosperous reign had brought in luxury with its attendant evils, Jehovah sent to Israel a missionary from Tekoa, in Judah. It was only twenty-two miles from Tekoa, the home of Amos, to Bethel, where he opened his ministry to Israel. Amos could eat breakfast at home and take supper in Bethel. The ministry of Amos probably came in the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II. (about 760 B.C.). He was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees. He was not educated for a prophet; but Jehovah called him from his humble employment to bear His message to the Northern Kingdom. He was a keen observer of men and things, burning with righteous indignation at the wrongs

heaped upon the poor and helpless. He was a fearless prophet of God, who would not be turned aside by threats of violence.

125. JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS

The text from which Amos preached was a trumpet call to repentance: "Jehovah will roar from Zion" (Amos 1:2). The God of Israel will come to judgment. Amos makes his appeal to conscience and reason.

Taking his stand at Bethel, perhaps on a feast day, Amos begins by announcing the overthrow of Israel's neighbors on account of their crimes. The heathen nations are to be punished for cruelty or inhumanity in some form. God holds them to a strict account for doing what they knew to be wrong. Judah and Israel He judges by a higher standard; for they had the Law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets to guide them in their moral and social life. The prophet arraigns Israel for covetousness, injustice, lasciviousness, and sacrilege; also for having forgotten Jehovah's kindness, and for having rejected His messengers (Amos 1, 2).

126. THREE DISCOURSES ON ISRAEL'S SINS

Three discourses on Israel's wickedness form the core of the Book of Amos. He announces the certain and terrible chastisements that are about to come upon the sinful nation.

(1) Jehovah brought Israel—both Ephraim and Judah—out of the land of Egypt, thus showing them favor above all the peoples of the world. Would He hold them accountable for their sins, or would they be excused as the favorites of Jehovah? "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). Privilege brings corresponding responsibility. Amos cannot refrain from

prophesying, because he has heard in his soul the roar of Jehovah's righteous wrath against Israel (Amos 3:3-8). On account of violence and robbery, the rich and luxurious shall perish, and the idol altars and ivory palaces shall be destroyed (Amos 3:9-15).

(2) Amos addresses the carousing and heathen women as "cows of Bashan" (Amos 4:1-3). With biting sarcasm, he invites the people to continue their sacrifices before the altars of Bethel and Gilgal (4:4, 5). Jehovah has sent chastisement after chastisement to turn Israel away from sin, but all in vain. Therefore let Israel get ready for a severer contest (4:6-13).

(3) The prophet's heart softens as he faces Israel's sad future. He pleads earnestly with Israel to seek Jehovah and live. Bribery and injustice are visible on every side; but Amos pleads for a radical change of heart in Israel: "Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." Moral reformation, if deep enough and thorough enough, may avert exile (5:1-15). Amos pronounces a woe upon the hypocrites who are wishing for the Day of Jehovah: it can bring nothing but greater distress to a people sunk in idolatry and injustice. The prophet gives expression to one of the noblest appeals ever uttered by a reformer: "But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5:16-27). A further woe is pronounced against the luxurious oppressors who feel secure. Judgment will overtake them; for Jehovah is going to send against Israel a nation that shall afflict them in all their borders (Amos 6). Amos evidently refers to Assyria, which first came into hostile contact with Israel under Ahab at the battle of Karkar in 854 B.C. Jehu paid tribute to Assyria in 842 B.C. During the greater part of the reign of Jeroboam II., Assyria was weak; but in 746 B.C. a great general came to the throne, and Assyria went forth

to conquer the world. Amos foretells the coming invasion.

127. FIVE VISIONS AND A STIRRING ENCOUNTER

The last three chapters of the Book of Amos relate five visions concerning Israel. (1) The prophet sees locusts eating up the land: he intercedes for Israel, and the scourge is not allowed to come in. (2) When fire threatens to burn up the land, Amos again prays for Jacob, and God withholds the threatened visitation (Amos 7:1-6). (3) Amos sees a plumbline in Jehovah's hand, and is told that judgment must come upon Israel: the idol altars shall be desolate, and Jehovah will "rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword" (7:7-9).

This last sentence gave the priest of Bethel the opening he had been seeking for. He longed to be rid of Amos and his stern preaching, and this reference to the king seemed to give him a weapon with which to run Amos out of the country. He sends a messenger to Jeroboam to inform him that Amos has conspired against him. Meantime the priest urges Amos to seek a living in Judah. He wishes Amos to know that he is not popular in Israel, and that a rustic prophet is out of place in the cultivated community at Bethel (7:10-13). Amos answers with heat that he is no professional prophet, but a man with a call direct from Jehovah (7:14-17). God reserves the right to choose His messengers, and He sometimes takes men from humble callings. A "consecrated cobbler" became the great leader in the modern missionary movement.

(4) Amos beheld in vision a basket of summer fruit. Iniquity was ripe for punishment (Amos 8). (5) Finally the prophet saw Jehovah preparing to destroy the sanctuary at Bethel and to punish the idolaters. But Jehovah would preserve every kernel, while sifting out the chaff (9:1-10).

The book closes with a prediction of better days for Israel and the house of David (9:11-15).

128. HOSEA THE PROPHET OF THE BROKEN HEART

Hosea began to prophesy toward the close of the reign of Jeroboam II. The Indian summer of Israel's history was fast passing over into the winter of their discontent. After Jeroboam came a period of anarchy and confusion. Zechariah was slain after a reign of six months; Shallum after only one month. A dozen years later Pekahiah was assassinated by Pekah, who afterwards met the same fate at the hands of Hoshea, the last king of Ephraim. All these were ungodly rulers, the morals of the nation sinking to the lowest ebb. The language of the prophet is influenced by the confusion about him in the nation and in his own home. He writes in broken sentences, because his heart is broken. Sin is everywhere. "There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood" (Hosea 4:2).

Of all the views concerning the marriage of Hosea, that advocated by Kirkpatrick and others seems to be the best. Hosea was directed to marry a woman given to idolatry—an idolatry which was often associated with licentiousness, although his bride was not an actually unchaste woman at first, but only a spiritual adulteress. She bore to the prophet three children, to whom symbolical names were given. Later on idolatry brought forth its natural fruitage, and Hosea's wife became an actual adulteress. Whether she then deserted Hosea, or whether he divorced her, we are not told. Now Hosea could understand why Jehovah was grieved with unfaithful Israel to the point of casting her off. The unspeakable love and compassion of God for His unfaithful spouse prepared Hosea in some measure to obey the divine command to recover his own unfaithful wife and

restore her to his home. Hosea's bitter domestic sorrow became an object lesson for himself and his people. His heart was almost broken by shame and grief, but he was thereby fitted to portray the heinousness of apostasy, on the one hand, and, on the other, Jehovah's tenderness and compassion toward His unfaithful people.

129. HOSEA REVEALS THE HEART OF GOD

Hosea expresses the divine jealousy as no other prophet could express it. He pictures Jehovah as a moth consuming Ephraim. He piles up figures to set forth the fierceness of His jealousy: "Therefore am I unto them as a lion; as a leopard will I watch by the way; I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart; and there will I devour them like a lioness; the wild beast shall tear them" (Hosea 13:7,8).

Are we sorry that Jehovah is jealous? What does jealousy imply? Out of what does it grow? Is it not *love* that prompts to jealousy? Can one be jealous without loving? Let us rejoice that God is jealous, when we forsake Him in our hearts to go off after any sort of idol.

Jehovah's deep love for Israel finds a voice in Hosea 11:8,9: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not come in wrath."

Our Lord Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6, one of the greatest verses in the book: "For I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings."

The closing chapter of the book is truly beautiful. The

superiority of Jehovah over all the gods of the heathen lies chiefly in His goodness and mercy (Hosea 14:3). The love and free grace of Jehovah are beautifully set forth in 14:4-8. The strength and beauty and fragrance of piety are illustrated in the people on whom Jehovah descends as the dew.

Chapter X

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PROPHECY

130. UZZIAH'S PROSPEROUS REIGN

UZZIAH'S reign in Judah was perhaps the most prosperous since Solomon's. In the year that this strong king died, Isaiah received his call to be a prophet. The country had enjoyed an era of agricultural and commercial development under Uzziah. Tribute flowed in from the Ammonites, and the avenue of trade through the Red Sea was open, as in the days of Solomon. The country was at peace with its neighbors. Wealth increased in the hands of the nobility and other landowners. Luxury, with its attendant train of evils, entered Jerusalem. There was sore need of a prophet to call the people to repentance and reformation.

131. ISAIAH'S VISION AND CALL

A young man of rare culture found himself caught up in vision into the heavenly temple. "In the year that king Uzziah died," he writes, "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, the skirts of His train filling the temple. Above Him were standing the seraphim, each one having six wings; with two he was accustomed to cover his face, and with two he would cover his feet, and with two he would fly. And one kept calling to another, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filling with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man

of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the *King*, Jehovah of hosts."

It was commonly believed in Israel that a vision of Jehovah meant death to a sinner. The vivid narrative continues: "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity shall depart, and thy sin shall be covered. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me."

It was not presumption on the part of the prophet to tender his services in the spirit of a volunteer; for he could not doubt that he had been brought into the presence of the King for this very purpose. Had he known how hard and discouraging his work would be, he might have hesitated to volunteer. Now follows his commission: "And He said, Go, and tell this people, Keep on hearing, but perceive not; keep on seeing, but understand not. Make fat the heart of this people, and make their ears heavy, and shut (smear over) their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and perceive with their heart, and turn again, and get healed."

We can well understand how the young prophet would be distressed at such a dismal prospect, and would wish to know whether light would yet break out of the darkness. "Then said I, Lord, how long? And He answered, Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste, and Jehovah have removed man far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be consumed: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock (stump) remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof." A small remnant shall be saved out of the over-

throw. The preservation of this pious remnant becomes a characteristic doctrine in Isaiah.

132. ISAIAH'S EARLY MINISTRY

There was work for the young prophet to do while his country was yet prosperous and secure. He denounced the sins that were rife in Jerusalem. Isaiah was almost certainly brought up and educated in the capital city of Judah, and all his thoughts center in her. How he loved Jerusalem and longed to see her the joy of the whole earth! He has done more than any other prophet to paint the contrast between the actual Jerusalem and the ideal. His words have done much to make Zion the religious capital of the world, the city that pious souls see in their dreams, the type of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem that is to come down from God out of heaven.

Chapters 2 to 4 perhaps were spoken during the prosperous reign of Jotham, about 738 B.C. First comes a splendid picture of Zion exalted at the head of the world's mountains, the rallying point of all nations, where Jehovah teaches men His law and decides all controversies. War, that dreadful scourge of nations, disappears forever (Isa. 2:2-4). This beautiful prophecy of Zion's ultimate glory is also found in Micah 4:1-3. The great prophet of the city and his contemporary from the country town of Moresheth-gath unite in picturing the glorious Zion of the future.

But the actual Jerusalem stands in striking contrast with Jehovah's thought for her. The land is full of soothsayers, of the idle rich, of rattling chariots, and, what is worse than all, idols abound. Jehovah must come to judgment with His sinful people. He will destroy the things that minister to pride, and will give the land up to anarchy and ruin. The grasping rulers and the dress-loving women shall be severely punished. The

prophet dumps the finery of the fashionable woman of the time all in a heap before our eyes (Isa. 2:5 to 4:1).

He closes with a picture of the chastened and purified Jerusalem of the future enjoying the protecting presence of Jehovah, as did Israel in the march through the wilderness to Canaan (4:2-6).

Perhaps chapter 5 belongs to this same period of prosperity, before the weakling Ahaz came to the throne. The prophet wins a hearing by proposing to sing a song concerning a vineyard. He describes a disappointing vineyard, and then suddenly identifies it with Israel and Judah (Isa. 5:1-7).

The prophet proceeds to pronounce a series of woes on six different classes of sinners. He first arraigns the land sharks. Monopoly will overreach itself and lead to desolation (5:8-10). Drunken revelers are next attacked. The drink problem confronted Isaiah, as it has faced earnest patriots in all ages. Crass ignorance, which always accompanies intemperance, is pushing Israel into captivity (5:11-17). Woe to defiant, sinful unbelievers (5:18, 19)! Woe to the perverters of moral distinctions, who try to erase the line separating right and wrong (5:20)! A woe is next pronounced on the conceited politicians (5:21). The concluding woe is aimed at the drunken, corrupt judges (5:22, 23).

The address closes with a vivid description of the coming of a fierce invading army (5:24-30).

Such pungent preaching ought to have awakened the rulers and the people of Judah to the dangers gathering like storm clouds over the land; but men were too intent on business or pleasure to heed the brilliant prophet's warnings.

133. ISAIAH FACES A CRISIS

Jotham, who had been regent for several years before the death of his father Uzziah, had only a brief separate

reign. He was succeeded by the weak Ahaz, who was completely under the influence of the heathen party at court. He plunged into idolatry in its coarsest and most cruel forms (2 Chron. 28:1-4). During the early part of the reign of Ahaz war broke out between Judah and the allied kings of Syria and Israel. It would seem that Rezin and Pekah wished to form an alliance of all the kings in Syria and Palestine against the Assyrians, who were becoming more and more aggressive under the military genius Tiglath-pileser III. (745 to 727 B.C.). When Ahaz refused to join the league, Rezin and Pekah resolved to dethrone him and put one of their own tools on the throne of Judah. Isaiah pictures the consternation in Judah when the news came that Syria and Israel were about to attack Jerusalem (Isa. 7:1, 2). What could Ahaz do to stem the tide of invasion? Would it not be wise to ask the Assyrians for aid in this crisis? The more the politicians at court discussed the matter in secret council, the more the plan of inviting aid from Tiglath-pileser commended itself to them as a politic stroke. Isaiah thought otherwise. He foresaw that the Assyrians would fasten the yoke on Judah, as well as on Syria and Israel.

The war at first went greatly in favor of the allied kings. The army of Judah suffered serious defeat in the field (2 Chron. 28:5-15). Jerusalem resisted attack successfully; but the enemy would probably return to besiege her. Hence Ahab sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser with a large present of money to obtain his aid. Nothing could please the Assyrian conqueror more than to hear that the petty kings of Syria had fallen out among themselves, and that one of them wished his help against the others. He promptly set his forces in motion against Rezin and Pekah.

Isaiah sought an interview with Ahaz, as the king was outside the city looking after his water supply in the event of a siege. The prophet tried to encourage the king

to be quiet and fear not on account of the schemes of the two petty kings on his northern border. He warned Ahaz against unbelief (Isa. 7:3-9). In a second interview Isaiah offers Ahaz a sign to strengthen his faith; but the king, in mock piety, declines to tempt Jehovah by asking a sign. Jehovah's messenger loses all patience with the unbelieving trickster, and announces the birth of Immanuel. The Assyrians, whom Ahaz has recently invited into the land, will shave Judah clean from top to toe (7:10-25).

Perhaps the first chapter in the roll of Isaiah belongs to this first political crisis in Isaiah's ministry. Judah had been overrun and devastated by the forces of Rezin and Pekah. Jerusalem itself was in a state of siege. The moral condition of the city was deplorable. The princes and judges took bribes and consorted with thieves. This chapter has been well called by Ewald "the great arraignment." The prophet first rebukes the nation for its ingratitude, folly, and stubborn rebellion (1:2-9). He then shows that observance of the Mosaic ritual is no substitute for right living. Formal and heartless worship is an abomination to Jehovah; but repentance and obedience will bring forgiveness and safety (1:10-20). He closes, after a contrast between Jerusalem's former purity and present corruption, with a prediction that the city shall be thoroughly purged by the destruction of transgressors, a holy remnant being left (1:21-31). The picture of the strong sinner as tow and his own work as the spark to set him on fire is very suggestive. Sin is a fire. As long as sin rules in a man he is a son of hell and will be aflame from his own deeds.

The Syrian crisis passed. At first it seemed that the policy adopted by Ahaz in calling in the Assyrians might be justified by the outcome. The Syrians and Ephraimites withdrew from Judah to look after their own countries, which were overrun by the fierce Assyrian soldiers. But soon it became evident to all that Tiglath-pileser

would demand an annual tribute from Judah, as well as from Syria and Ephraim. From the beginning Isaiah had looked upon the Assyrians, not as allies and friends, but as a menace to the very life of the kingdom of Jehovah as represented by the people of Judah. During the nearly forty years in which he continued to prophesy in Jerusalem the Assyrian was constantly in his thoughts.

134. JEHOVAH AND ASSYRIA

When the Assyrian River overflowed its banks and swept onward into Judah, reaching to the neck, Isaiah heartened himself by presenting the danger to Immanuel, the divine owner of the land. He who bore that noble name—"God with us"—would be a defense against all foes. Let Judah fear to sin against Jehovah, who dwells in Mount Zion. Those who turn to wizards and necromancers will only go on into blacker darkness of despair (Isa. 8).

Isaiah soon saw that Jehovah was using the Assyrian as a rod with which to chastise Israel and Judah. But the proud Assyrian took quite a different view of the situation. To him Jehovah was only the god of a small nation, and not to be compared with Asshur and Ishtar, whom the Assyrians worshiped. The Assyrian king never dreamed that he was merely an instrument in the hands of Jehovah. Isaiah claimed him as such from his first entrance into Judah. Soon the prophet began to announce the ultimate overthrow of the Assyrian in the Holy Land. This message he repeated many times. Perhaps the skeptics mocked as the years went by, and the Assyrians still lorded it over Judah and all the other peoples in Syria and Palestine. But Isaiah kept on predicting that Jehovah would tread the Assyrian under foot on His mountains (Isa. 10:12, 15-19, 24-27, 33, 34; 14:24-27; 17:12-14; 29:5-8; 30:27-33; 31:8, 9; 33:1-12; 37:29). He makes it plain that the blow is

to be a supernatural stroke, and not a victory achieved by man: "And the Assyrian shall fall by the sword, not of man; and the sword, not of men, shall devour him."

135. ISAIAH AND SENNACHERIB

In 701 B.C. Sennacherib invaded Judah at the head of an immense army of trained soldiers. Forty-six fortified cities fell before the battering-rams of the besiegers. More than two hundred thousand persons were swept away into exile. Hezekiah was shut up like a bird in a cage in Jerusalem. The proud Assyrian was sweeping all before him. He sent a part of his army, under Rabshakeh, to demand the keys of the capital city. He ridiculed the idea that Jehovah would deliver Jerusalem out of his hands. When Rabshakeh's mission failed, Sennacherib wrote a letter to Hezekiah, warning him that no gods had ever delivered their lands out of his hands. How, then, could Jehovah save Jerusalem from his grasp?

In this crisis all eyes are turned toward Isaiah. Hezekiah asks him to pray for the remnant left in the land. Isaiah predicts that Sennacherib shall leave Judah and return to his own land. Jehovah is God of all the earth, though the Assyrian knows it not. Through Isaiah He replies to the challenge of the Assyrian: "Because of thy raging against Me, and because thine arrogancy is come up into Mine ears, therefore will I put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest" (Isa. 37:29).

Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia and Egypt, tried in vain to drive Sennacherib out of Judah. The Assyrians were preparing to close in upon Jerusalem and capture it, when a sudden disaster of supernatural proportions overtook them. In one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers perished (Isa. 37:36-38). Isaiah's prophetic foresight was at last vindicated. For the few remaining

years of Hezekiah's reign he was perhaps greatly honored by both king and people.

136. HEZEKIAH'S GOOD REIGN

Hezekiah reversed the religious policy of his father Ahaz, and at the very beginning of his reign cleansed the temple and made provision for the worship of Jehovah according to the Law of Moses. He decided to keep the Passover in the second month, as the temple was not ready in time to celebrate it in the first month. He also encouraged many to take part in the feast who had not made the proper preparation for doing so. The pious king prayed Jehovah to overlook the irregularity and to accept the worshipers. He also made provision for the support of the priests and Levites. "And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered" (2 Chron. 29 to 31).

Hezekiah was perplexed by the political questions that confronted him. Some of his courtiers favored an alliance with Egypt against Assyria. They hoped in this way to escape the heavy annual tribute demanded by the Assyrian king. Isaiah opposed this policy with great earnestness. He estimated Egypt and Ethiopia at their real strength, and foretold that the Assyrian would conquer them. The folly of trusting in Egypt and Ethiopia is the theme of several discourses (Isa. 18 to 20; 30:1-7; 31:1-3). Hezekiah was finally won over by the Egyptian party to rebel against the Assyrians, relying upon Egypt for help. We have already seen that he was brought low, and but for the sword of Jehovah, which destroyed the greater part of Sennacherib's army, Hezekiah would have been captured and all his people swept into exile. Isaiah, the inspired statesman, was shown to

be wiser than the politicians who insisted on an alliance with Egypt.

137. THE MESSIANIC KING

To speak of Isaiah and omit his prophecies of the Messiah would be to leave out the heart of his message. Already in the days of Ahaz he predicted the birth of a son who should bear the great name Immanuel—"God with us" (Isa. 7:14-16). Taken alone, this prophecy is very much of an enigma; and so the commentators have a good time speculating on its meaning. We can understand it better in connection with the other Messianic prophecies in Isaiah. In 8:8 Isaiah suddenly addresses Immanuel as the owner and protector of Judah. We might even yet think that we were dealing with a purely imaginary character; but Isaiah 9:1-7 and 11:1-10 make it plain that Isaiah expected a great Deliverer to sit on the throne of David. His name shows that He is more than a mere man. The best grouping makes the name fourfold—"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." The Prince bearing this great name is to sit on the throne of David.

Isaiah 11:1-10 adds to the picture several important touches. The Messianic King is to spring from the stock of Jesse. The Spirit of Jehovah will equip Him for His work. He administers justice with supernatural skill. His reign will introduce the era of perfect peace, all destructive activity ceasing in the entire animal creation. Moreover, the Gentiles will come to the Messiah. For additional glimpses of the Messianic King see Isaiah 16:5; 32:1-5.

138. ISAIAH AND THE EXILE

In the midst of Isaiah's ministry Samaria fell into

the hands of the Assyrian, and her people were carried away to the Far East. The idea of an exile was often in the prophet's mind. It was a present reality for Israel, and he often asked himself whether Judah would not also be swept away before the invaders. Sennacherib claims to have carried into exile over two hundred thousand of the people of Judah. But Isaiah was sure that Assyria would not swallow up Judah. Jehovah would crush the Assyrian with miraculous power.

Isaiah predicted that Babylon would carry the Judeans into captivity (Isa. 39). Micah also named Babylon as the scene of the exile of Judah (Micah 4:9, 10). For additional references to captivity, see Isaiah 6:11-13; 5:13.

Does Isaiah foretell the return from exile? If he is the author of all parts of the roll bearing his name, as was almost universally believed until 1780 A.D., he certainly predicted the return many times and in striking sentences. Recent radical criticism finds at least three main authors in the roll of Isaiah, and possibly a goodly number of editors. Here again subjective criticism must be checked by common sense. Of course, only one believing in supernatural revelation can accept the great prophecy in Isaiah 40 to 66 as coming from a prophet of the eighth century B.C. How could Isaiah describe the career of a king born more than a century after his own death? Many noble Christian scholars have accepted the view that the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah are the work of a prophet of the Exile contemporary with Cyrus the Great (550 to 529 B.C.). Canon Driver and Dr. George Adam Smith have argued with great skill and earnestness for the correctness of this view. Still, the argument is by no means all one way. We prefer to treat the roll of Isaiah as a unity. In almost all the sections transferred by the divisive critics to the sixth century or later there are predictions of a return from the Exile (Isa. 14:1,2; 27:12,13; 35:10; 44:24-28; 45:13;

48: 20, 21; 49: 8-26; 51: 3, 11, 14; 52: 7-12, etc.). Micah, Isaiah's contemporary, also predicted the return from captivity (Micah 4: 6-10; 7: 11-13).

139. THE BOOK OF COMFORT

There is a shorter book of comfort in Isaiah 24 to 27. In it are found some of the most beautiful passages in the roll of Isaiah. What could be more beautiful and touching than the picture of the feast spread by Jehovah in Mount Zion for all the peoples of the earth? "And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He hath swallowed up death forever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Isa. 25: 6-8). The grace and tenderness of God are here in perfection. Chapter 26 not only contains the promise of the resurrection of dead Israel, but also an assurance that has guided many into the way of peace: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose imagination is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee" (26: 3).

But Isaiah 40 to 66 is justly entitled "The Book of Comfort;" for the saints for more than two thousand years have bound up their broken hearts with its comforting promises. It is full of descriptions of God's character and of His plans for His distressed people. We are in sight of God or the Suffering Servant or the Holy Spirit all the way through. God tells of the good things He means to do for His people. There is no better way of comforting the saints than to fill their minds and hearts with the sense of God's power and wisdom and goodness and free grace. A vision of the Servant of Jehovah suffering instead of the sinner also melts the heart to tears of gratitude. And when the Spirit draws the veil from the future and lets the believer see some of the glories that await him, this, too, strengthens the heart to bear present trials and afflictions.

140. THE PROPHET'S TEACHING CONCERNING GOD

Who ever described the might and the tenderness of God as they are pictured in Isaiah 40:10, 11? The figure of the conquering king is quickly followed by that of the good shepherd. What theologian ever impressed on the mind of man the power and wisdom of God as the prophet does in 40:12-31? Such a Personality cannot forget His people in their distress. They shall have strength for all their duties—their commonplace tasks as well as their more notable achievements (Isa. 40:31).

No other writer surpasses Isaiah in persuasive appeal to a higher faith. Take a few out of many examples: "Thou art My servant; I have chosen thee and not cast thee away; fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (41:9, 10). "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (43:2). "Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel; for thou art My servant: I have formed thee; thou art My servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee" (44:21, 22).

Here are many precious and exceeding great promises: "And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (65:24). "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (66:13).

The merciful and loving God is seen in all the wealth of His sympathy: "In all their affliction He was afflicted,

and the Angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (63:9).

141. THE PROPHET'S PICTURE OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT

In Isaiah 40 to 55 the word *servant* is a keyword. Jehovah calls Israel His servant. Evidently the word servant in the singular throughout these chapters refers to Israel in some sense. But who and what is Israel? Is it always a collective, referring to a body of people? Or may it also refer to a single individual identified with Israel as its head? Delitzsch employs the figure of a pyramid to illustrate the uses of the word servant in these chapters. At the base is Israel in its totality as a nation—good, bad, and indifferent; higher up is a better Israel—the prophets and other spiritual men; at the apex is One, the Second Israel, as He was the Second Adam and the Second David, Himself an Israelite, and achieving the work that the nation as a whole failed to perform.

Isaiah 42: 1-12 and 49: 1-13 describe the Servant's call, His gentleness and perseverance, and His twofold mission to Jew and Gentile. In Isaiah 50: 4-11 the patience and endurance of the Servant under persecution are emphasized. The greatest chapter in the Old Testament is Isaiah 53. The chapter division is here unfortunate; for the great picture of the Suffering Servant includes Isaiah 52: 13 to 53: 12, a section of fifteen verses, which fall into five paragraphs of three verses each. The section has the symmetry of a poem. This is the highest peak of Old Testament revelation. We might properly give it the title of this *Manual*, and call it "The Heart of the Old Testament." Read it in the American Standard Revision, and note the following outline:

a. Astounding contrast between the humiliation and the supreme exaltation of the Servant of Jehovah (52: 13-15).

b. "Rejected of men" (53:1-3). He came unto His own, and they received Him not.

c. The Servant's sufferings are vicarious (53:4-6). He takes the place of the guilty and dies in their stead. The doctrine of substitutionary suffering is taught over and over again in these verses. Is there a greater verse in the Old Testament than Isaiah 53:5? It is the Old Testament equivalent of John 3:16. Let its words ring in our souls forever: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." We may translate the first half of the verse more literally: "But He was pierced through (mortally wounded) for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities."

d. The Servant, innocent as a lamb, goes to death without resistance (53:7-9). Pilate marveled at the silence of Jesus.

e. The Servant's death, far from being an accident, was in Jehovah's plan for human redemption. The Servant will be satisfied with the results of His travail (53:10-12).

The New Testament application of this great prophecy to Jesus is not an accommodation of words originally spoken of Israel as a nation, but a recognition of the fact that the prophet painted in advance a portrait of which Jesus Christ is the original.

142. THE PROPHET'S TEACHING AS TO THE FUTURE OF GOD'S KINGDOM

From Isaiah 2:2-4 we learn that the world is to get its religion from Zion. In Isaiah 19:24, 25, is a prediction that the world empires will one day unite with Israel in the worship of Jehovah. The God of Israel admits the great heathen nations to fellowship with His people and with Himself. He will make a feast for all nations on

Mount Zion and wipe tears from off all faces (Isa. 25:6-8). Zion will be greatly enlarged as a result of the Servant's sufferings (chapter 54). She will yet shine resplendent, and be the center of the world's worship (chapters 60, 62). The most distant future will reveal the safety and the glory of Zion (65:17-25; 66:10-14).

143. THE MINISTRY OF MICAH

Micah was contemporary with Isaiah, and is worthy to be associated with that wonderful genius. He is vigorous and fearless in denunciation of wrong, and clear and forceful in his doctrinal teaching, and tender and persuasive in appeal. He reveals the source of his fearless denunciation of wrong, when he says: "But as for me, I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin" (Micah 3:8). He arraigns the political and religious rulers as the leaders in sin: "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, that abhor justice, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet they lean upon Jehovah, and say, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? no evil shall come upon us." Was there ever a more pungent indictment of a nation's ruling classes? What must be the outcome of such conduct? "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest" (Micah 3:9-12).

The prophet's burning words went home to the conscience, and Hezekiah prayed to Jehovah for forgiveness (Jer. 26:17-19).

It was Micah who foretold that the great Ruler of the future would come out of little Bethlehem (Micah

5:2-6). He describes the future glory of the pious remnant of Jacob under the figure of the refreshing dew and of the mighty lion (5:7-9).

Micah's greatest contribution to the religious thought and life of the world is his admirable summary of Jehovah's requirements (Micah 6:6-8). He asks not for sacrifices nor gifts. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Chapter XI

DRIFTING TOWARD CAPTIVITY

WITH the passing of Isaiah and Micah and Hezekiah, three great and good men whose deaths were not far apart, Judah fell upon evil times. Even with these great men to guide her affairs, Judah had suffered seriously from the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib. The country was impoverished, and many of the inhabitants swept into exile.

144. MANASSEH'S LONG AND WICKED REIGN

Hezekiah was succeeded in 698 B.C. by his son Manasseh, a boy of twelve years. The heathen party at once assumed control. The historian says of Manasseh: "And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of Jehovah. He also made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; and he practiced augury, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke Him to anger." "And Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did evil more than did the nations whom Jehovah destroyed before the children of Israel" (2 Chron. 33:1-9).

The God of Israel sent prophets to warn Manasseh; but he gave no heed. According to a Jewish tradition, the prophet Isaiah was sawn asunder by his order. Perhaps this tradition is untrustworthy; but it is an evidence of the evil name left in Judah by the cruel king. The author of 2 Kings adds to his indictment of this

wicked man, "Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (2 Kings 21:16).

Manasseh's reign really decided the fate of Judah. He made it well-nigh impossible for a good king like Josiah or a great prophet like Jeremiah to wean the people from idolatry and heathen immorality. "And Jehovah spake by His servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, that were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols; therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Behold, I bring such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle" (2 Kings 21:10-15). Captivity became inevitable through Manasseh's long and wicked reign.

When Manasseh was bound by the Assyrians and taken in fetters to Babylon, he repented and prayed God for forgiveness. He was restored to his land, and there tried to undo the work of his previous life. He was only partially successful (2 Chron. 33:10-20).

Amon imitated his father's wicked practices during his brief reign (2 Chron. 33:21-25).

145. JOSIAH'S GOOD REIGN

Josiah was the last good king of Judah. He came to the throne as a boy of eight. In the eighth year of his reign he began to seek after Jehovah, and in the twelfth year he began to break down the images of Baal and Astarte. In the eighteenth year of his reign (623 B.C.) Josiah repaired the temple. Hilkiyah the high priest found in the temple a copy of the book of the law, which he delivered to Shaphan the scribe, who read it and then brought it to the attention of king Josiah. As soon as the book was read before the pious king, he rent his garments as a sign of his grief and fear, and sent messengers

to inquire of Jehovah what he should do (2 Kings 22:1-13). The messengers inquired of Huldah the prophetess, who informed them that the threats of the book of the law would be fulfilled. Because of Josiah's humility and penitence, the evil should not come in his days (2 Kings 22:14-20).

Josiah assembled his people to hear the words of the newly-found book of the covenant, and led them to promise to stand to the covenant. He then went forth to destroy idol images in Jerusalem and throughout his realm. With iconoclastic zeal he broke in pieces all the pillars, and cut down the wooden images of Astarte, and defiled with dead men's bones the places of idol worship. He showed no mercy to idolatry and superstition, but smote them hip and thigh (2 Kings 23:1-25). So far as the king could elevate the moral and religious life of his people he did so. During the latter part of Josiah's reign there was outward conformity to the law of Jehovah; but the hearts of the people were largely set on idols, and they were only waiting for a change of kings to plunge once again into heathen license. It was a sad day for Jeremiah and the spiritual element in Judah, when Josiah was brought home from Megiddo dead in his chariot (2 Chron. 35:20-27).

146. NAHUM ANNOUNCES THE FALL OF NINEVEH

The prophecy of Nahum has for its theme the approaching capture and sack of the cruel capital of the Assyrian empire. The character of Jehovah is the foundation on which Nahum builds: "Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies" (Nah. 1:2). The side of retributive righteousness is turned toward the cruel oppressor. "Jehovah is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that take refuge in

Him" (Nah. 1:7). All who turn to Jehovah for help find Him good and kind.

The second chapter of Nahum is a vivid picture of the siege and capture of Nineveh. The third chapter indicates constant war and violence as the cause of her downfall. Jehovah is against her, and He will surely bring her to the ground.

Nahum perhaps prophesied about 630 B.C. Nineveh was destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians about 606 B.C.

147. ZEPHANIAH PROCLAIMS THE DAY OF JEHOVAH'S WRATH

Zephaniah was probably of princely birth, a descendant of good King Hezekiah. He prophesied during the reign of Josiah, probably between 630 and 625 B.C. (Zeph. 1:1). He may have helped forward the reforms inaugurated by the young king.

Zephaniah is known chiefly for his description of the day of Jehovah's wrath against sinners. The famous Latin hymn by Thomas of Celano, beginning, *Dies irae dies illa*, is founded on Zephaniah 1:14-18. Under the shadow of that day of darkness the prophet cries aloud: "Seek ye Jehovah, all ye meek of the earth, that have kept His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be that ye will be hid in the day of Jehovah's anger" (Zeph. 2:3).

Heavy judgments will overtake the Gentiles for their pride (Zeph. 2:4-15). At least one great blessing will come from these judgments: "Jehovah will be terrible unto them; for He will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations" (Zeph. 2:11). Jehovah will yet starve the idols to death. Then all men will recognize Him alone as God.

Zephaniah paints the sin of Jerusalem in colors as dark

as those of any previous prophet: "Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they leave nothing till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have profaned the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law" (Zeph. 3:1-7). What hope, then, is there for such a wicked city? It is found in the presence of another Person: "Jehovah in the midst of her is righteous; He will not do iniquity; every morning doth He bring His justice to light, He faileth not" (Zeph. 3:5).

Jehovah has purposes of grace for both Judah and the Gentiles: "For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve Him with one consent" (Zeph. 3:9). To Jerusalem it shall be said: "Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save; He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17). If Zephaniah is first of all a preacher of judgment on sinners, he also has a gospel for both Jew and Gentile.

148. HABAKKUK AND HIS PROBLEM

The prophecy of Habakkuk probably belongs in the reign of Jehoiakim, who reigned from 609 to 598 B.C. We know nothing of the personal history of the prophet; but his mind is revealed with singular frankness. He thinks aloud, stating to others the problems that press upon him for solution.

The book opens with a cry to Jehovah, because the law is slacked, and injustice triumphs in Judah (Hab. 1:2-4). In answer, Jehovah points to the terrible Chaldeans, whom He has raised up as a scourge to the nations (Hab. 1:5-11). Instead of affording a solution of the problem that disturbed Habakkuk, the treacherous and cruel Chaldeans present another phase of the same problem. Why does Jehovah let a nation as wicked as the Chaldeans tri-

umph over peoples better than they? Habakkuk comforts himself with the thought that the Rock of Israel will protect His people from annihilation (Hab. 1:12-17). He takes his stand upon his tower to see what Jehovah will say in reply to his complaint. He receives a revelation of many woes on proud and cruel Babylon. Judgment will overtake her for all her crimes. "But the righteous shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4).

A beautiful prayer, in the most elevated poetry, closes the book. The prophet prays for a revival of Jehovah's work. He recalls Jehovah's former notable deliverances of His people. He is thus enabled to rise to a plane on which he is free from the dominion of outward circumstances. Rough Chaldean invaders may press in upon Judah and rob and plunder, but the prophet will rejoice in Jehovah:

"For though the fig-tree shall not flourish,
Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
The labor of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no food;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
Yet will I rejoice in Jehovah,
I will joy in the God of my salvation."
(Hab. 3:17, 18.)

Habakkuk rose to the level of Christian experience in his attitude toward troubles and calamities.

149. JEREMIAH'S EARLY MINISTRY

Jeremiah is easily the foremost man in the seventh century B.C., as Isaiah was the greatest man in the century preceding. We have reserved the study of his life and work until we could pursue it without a break.

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah (628 B.C.), about the time

that the young king had begun his reforms. At first Jeremiah tried to decline the office, on the ground that he was too young; but Jehovah renewed the call, and encouraged him by putting forth His hand in the vision and touching the young man's mouth, saying: "Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:9, 10). Here are four words of destructive activity and only two of constructive work. In this we have a hint that most of Jeremiah's work would be to destroy false hopes; only then could he build on a solid foundation.

Jeremiah is told in advance that he is to be opposed by princes, priests, and people alike; but Jehovah will be with him to strengthen him. The timid and sensitive young man is promised all the help he needs. Orelli well says of Jeremiah: "As man he melts in tears and pines away in sympathy, as the bearer of God's word he is firm and hard like pillar and wall, on which the storm of a nation's wrath breaks in vain."

The early discourses of Jeremiah reveal a state of religious apostasy and moral degeneracy in Judah. Even the heathen stick to their gods; but Israel has exchanged the living God for worthless idols. Jehovah complains: "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:11). As Jeremiah first wrote his early prophecies in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C.), it is probable that much of his denunciation refers to the wickedness of Judah under the cruel Jehoiakim.

In process of time Jehovah's people will recognize their terrible blunder: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee" (Jer. 2:19). Superficial reformation will not suffice: "For though thou wash thee with lye, and take thee

much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord Jehovah" (Jer. 2:22). Every city in Judah has its own god (Jer. 2:28). Jeremiah looked beneath the surface of Josiah's reformation, and saw that the hearts of the people were not in it: "And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not returned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith Jehovah" (Jer. 3:10).

Jeremiah announces the approach of an invader, possibly the irruption of the Scythian hordes from the north. The prophet is in distress: "My anguish, my anguish! I am pained at my very heart; my heart is disquieted within me; I cannot hold my peace; because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war" (Jer. 4:19). The people flee to the thickets and the crags; but the pursuers overtake them (Jer. 4:27-31).

Jehovah offers to pardon Jerusalem if a single just and faithful man can be found in her (Jer. 5:1). The desperate situation in Judah is stated by the prophet thus: "A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will you do in the end thereof?" (Jer. 5:30, 31).

After another chapter of warnings and appeals, the prophet concludes that the nation is doomed: "The bellows blow fiercely: the lead is consumed of the fire: in vain do they go on refining; for the wicked are not plucked away. Refuse silver shall men call them, because Jehovah hath rejected them" (Jer. 6:29, 30).

In 610 B.C. Josiah fell in the battle of Megiddo. Jeremiah composed a lamentation over the death of the pious king. Jehoahaz held the throne for three months, when he was removed by Pharaoh-necho, and Jehoiakim came to the throne. He was the most treacherous and

cruel of the four wicked kings that followed Josiah in Judah.

150. JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY UNDER JEHOIAKIM

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim Jehovah commanded Jeremiah to stand in the court of the temple and to warn the people that their beautiful sanctuary would presently be made a desolation like Shiloh. The substance of this stirring discourse is found in Jeremiah 7:1 to 8:3. The sermon so angered the religious leaders that they seized him to put him to death. Jeremiah was put on trial before the princes, the priests and the prophets being his chief accusers. The prophet replies that Jehovah has sent him, and that the proper thing to do is to amend their ways and their doings. If they put him to death, they will bring innocent blood upon themselves; for Jehovah verily sent him to speak these words in their ears (Jer. 26:1-16).

The civil rulers were better men than the priests and the prophets, and they cite the case of Micah and his severe prediction against Zion as a precedent for releasing Jeremiah (Jer. 26:17-19). Matters went worse with the prophet Uriah, who spoke in words similar to Jeremiah's. He was slain with the sword by Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:20-24).

Jeremiah's sermon in 7:1 to 8:3 is a fine specimen of earnest, fearless preaching. Read it, and you will not wonder that the false prophets clamored for his blood.

Jeremiah's grief becomes more intense, as he discovers that Judah's idolatry is incurable. He longs for comfort against sorrow. He sometimes wishes that his eyes were a fountain of tears. He would like to leave his sinful people for a lodge in some wilderness (Jer. 8:18 to 9:6).

One of Jeremiah's heaviest trials was the knowledge that his prayers on behalf of Judah could not be heard.

Jehovah forbids him to pray for the people given over to high-handed rebellion (Jer. 7:16-18; 11:14; 14:11). But the prophet cannot refrain from praying for his people. The spirit of intercession seizes him, and he pleads with Jehovah not to abhor His people (Jer. 14:19-22). Jehovah replies: "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth" (Jer. 15:1). Prayer cannot now save Judah from exile.

Besides the struggle within the sympathetic soul of the prophet at this time, there was conspiracy without; for the men of Anathoth, his native village, were plotting against his life (Jer. 11:18-23). Even Jeremiah's own kindred were in the plot (Jer. 12:5,6). Problems of the divine government bore heavily upon Jeremiah, just as they did upon his contemporary Habakkuk (Jer. 12:1,2). The false prophets contradicted Jeremiah continually, and called him a croaker or a traitor (Jer. 14:13-18). It seemed to the sensitive prophet that every one was cursing him (Jer. 15:10). He opens his heart to God and tells of his disappointment in connection with his fruitless ministry (Jer. 15:10-21).

Jeremiah's loneliness was a great trial. Isaiah had a wife in sympathy with him in his great work; but Jeremiah was forbidden to marry (Jer. 16:1-4). Hated and cursed by the people for whom he kept praying, he had scarcely a soul to whom he could turn for sympathy and counsel. He was shut up to dependence on Jehovah, with whom he pleaded: "Be not a terror unto me: Thou art my refuge in the day of evil" (Jer. 17:17).

Jehovah made revelation of His freedom to change His attitude to meet the changed attitude of a nation (Jer. 18:1-12). This is one of the most important chapters in the roll of Jeremiah. Men have often fancied that they could get God in a corner and compel Him to do that which they wished, even though it might be

unworthy of God. Not so, says the word of Jehovah through Jeremiah; for God is free to adapt Himself to changed conditions. He often predicts evil, in order that it may be averted through the repentance of those upon whom it would otherwise have fallen. He also predicts blessing; but no one can presume upon God's promises and demand the blessing, if his life has been unworthy.

Jeremiah was finally arrested, smitten, and put in the stocks by Pashhur the priest, who was chief officer of the temple. As persecution became severer the sensitive prophet suffered keenly in his soul. It seems that he tried to quit prophesying: "And if I say, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain" (Jer. 20:9). In desperation the prophet curses the day wherein he was born (Jer. 20:14-18).

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C.), Jehovah commanded Jeremiah to take a roll and write therein all the words He had given him to speak against Israel and against Judah. Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah and dictated to him the substance of the messages he had delivered to Judah from 628 to 605 B.C. Baruch then read from the roll in the temple in the hearing of the people.

In the following year (604 B.C.) Baruch again read from the roll in the ears of the people of Judah on a fast-day. When Micaiah reported the substance of the book to the princes, they sent for Baruch to read the roll in their hearing. It seemed to them important that King Jehoiakim should know the contents of the book. They warned Baruch to hide and to cause Jeremiah also to hide, lest Jehoiakim should seek to slay them.

When the princes reported to the king concerning the roll, he sent for it, and after hearing three or four columns read, he seized it, cut it with a pen-knife, and

threw it into the fire in the brazier. He also sought to kill Jeremiah and Baruch; "but Jehovah hid them" (Jer. 36: 1-26).

At the command of Jehovah, Jeremiah reproduced the words that were in the roll which Jehoiakim had burned in the fire; "and there were added besides unto them many like words" (Jer. 36: 27-32).

Jeremiah was in great danger of losing his life throughout the reign of Jehoiakim. Then came the very brief reign of Jehoiachin. Nebuchadrezzar took the young king captive to Babylon, leaving Zedekiah on the throne of Judah (2 Kings 24: 8-17).

151. JEREMIAH'S MINISTRY UNDER ZEDEKIAH

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was inclined to treat Jeremiah with kindness; but he was a weak man, without sufficient energy and courage to do what he knew to be right. From the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C.), when Nebuchadrezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, Jeremiah preached submission to the Babylonian king (Jer. 25: 11). Throughout Zedekiah's reign (597-587 B.C.) Jeremiah taught that Jehovah had given Judah and the other nations into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar. He claimed the great Babylonian conqueror as a servant to Jehovah (Jer. 27: 6). He urged Zedekiah and his people to serve Nebuchadrezzar faithfully (Jer. 27: 12). He denounced the false prophets who were encouraging the people to hope for a speedy return of the vessels of the temple carried off by the Babylonians in 605 and 598 B.C. (Jer. 27: 14-22).

In the fourth year of Zedekiah (594 B.C.) the prophet Hananiah predicted that within two years the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar would be broken, and that Jehoiachin and the captives would return to Jerusalem. Hananiah gave emphasis to his prediction by taking the bar from off the neck of Jeremiah and breaking it. A few days later

Jeremiah foretold the death of Hananiah as a punishment for making Judah trust in a lie (chapter 28).

Jeremiah also had a contest by letter with the false prophets among the exiles in Babylon (chapter 29). He predicted that at the end of seventy years the people in exile would pray to their God and be brought back home (Jer. 29:10-14).

Encouraged by the false prophets and by promises of help from Egypt, Zedekiah finally rebelled against Nebuchadrezzar. Jeremiah preached submission and surrender from the beginning of the Babylonian invasion until the capture of Jerusalem (chapters 21, 34, 37, and 38). At first Jeremiah was not molested, though he must have been exceedingly unpopular. Under the pressure of fear, Zedekiah and the people made a covenant to release all their Hebrew slaves; but when the Chaldeans raised the siege of Jerusalem in order to meet the army of Pharaoh-hophra, the people forced their former slaves back into bondage (chapter 34). Jeremiah predicted that the Chaldeans would return and burn Jerusalem with fire (Jer. 37:1-10).

The prophet thought it a good time to leave Jerusalem, while the Chaldeans were busy elsewhere, and so he set out for Anathoth; but an officer arrested him as he was in the gate of the city, and accused him of deserting to the Chaldeans. The princes smote Jeremiah, and put him in the dungeon in the house of Jonathan the scribe (Jer. 37:11-15).

The Chaldeans defeated the Egyptian army, and returned to the siege of Jerusalem. Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah to learn whether there was any word from Jehovah. The prophet told him that he would be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. He requested the king not to send him back to the dungeon. He was transferred to the court of the guard, where he received a loaf of bread daily until all the bread in the city was spent (Jer. 37:16-21).

As Jeremiah kept preaching submission to the Chaldeans, the princes demanded of Zedekiah that he be put to death as a traitor. The prophet was cast into the mire of a dungeon in the court of the guard. An Ethiopian interceded for Jeremiah, and received permission to draw him out of the mire. He then remained a prisoner in the court of the guard until the city was taken (chapter 38).

152. JEREMIAH'S CLOSING DAYS

Jeremiah was not carried to Babylon with Zedekiah and the other captives, but was encouraged to abide with the remnant that was left in Judah. He remained with the new governor, Gedaliah. After the assassination of Gedaliah, Jeremiah went with Johanan to Bethlehem (chapters 40, 41).

The old prophet was carried by force into Egypt, where he foretold the coming of Nebuchadrezzar to the Nile valley (chapters 42, 43). In his old age Jeremiah made an earnest appeal to the Jews in Egypt to turn away from idolatry; but they flatly refused to do so, openly affirming that they were better off when they worshiped the queen of heaven (chapter 44). There is a Jewish tradition to the effect that the people finally stoned Jeremiah to death.

The ministry of Jeremiah, though long and faithful, was seemingly a complete failure. An intense patriot, he was accounted a traitor; longing to turn his people from sin and captivity, he must constantly announce the certainty of exile; a lover of peace, he spent his life battling against idolatry.

153. JEREMIAH'S LIFE NOT A FAILURE

Jeremiah helped the people of God to go through the temptations of the Exile without making shipwreck of

faith. He showed that Jehovah's hand was in the downfall of Judah. He claimed Nebuchadrezzar as a servant in the hands of Jehovah. The gods of Babylon had nothing to do with the successes of Nebuchadrezzar.

Two doctrines taught by Jeremiah helped to make the transition to a higher stage of religious thought and life.

(1) His doctrine of *individualism*. He attacks the proverb by which the captives were excusing themselves: "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge" (Jer. 31:29, 30).

(2) Jeremiah's doctrine of the *new covenant* marks a transition from a covenant on tables of stone to a covenant in the heart. See Hebrews 8:7-13. New Testament religion emphasizes individualism and spirituality. God deals with every man; and He requires of him love and faith and fellowship.

Chapter XII

THE EXILE

154. THE EXILE A PROCESS

THE Exile was a process rather than an event. The Assyrians were busy from 734 to 722 B.C. with repeated invasions of the country occupied by the Ten Tribes. Several companies of captives were taken to the East. We usually think of 722 B.C. as the year of the Assyrian Exile, because Samaria fell in that year, and its inhabitants were transported into the country of the Medes; but Tiglath-pileser had already carried captive the people east of the Jordan and in Galilee.

The same process was repeated in the Babylonian Exile. As early as 605 B.C., Daniel and others were carried from Jerusalem to Babylon. In 598 B.C. King Johoiachin and many of his people were carried to Babylon. The climax was reached in 587 B.C., when Jerusalem was captured and the temple burned by the Chaldeans. Zedekiah and most of the people remaining in Judah were carried captive to Babylon.

155. EFFECT OF THE EXILE ON THE JEWS

It was a sorrowful time when the Jews were gathered together by their captors for the long journey away from the home land into a foreign country. When at last the temple was burned and the kingdom of Judah was crushed altogether, many must have come to think that Jehovah was not equal in might to the gods of Babylon. Some gave up their religious faith and were assimilated

to the heathen. Others listened to the false prophets, who predicted that Jehovah would soon restore His people to their own land. Jeremiah and Ezekiel taught their people that the captivity itself was brought about by Israel's God as a chastisement for their idolatry and immorality. The Exile was Jehovah's school of discipline for His rebellious people. As soon as it should accomplish its work in leading Judah to a higher moral and religious life, Jehovah would deliver His people from their captors.

There is no evidence to prove that the sufferings of the Jews in Babylon were exceptionally heavy. They were allowed to settle in Babylonia and to engage in commerce. The artisans found employment in their new home. There seems to have been no serious persecution of the Jews for their religious views or practices.

Of course, the ritual of the temple worship ceased with the destruction of Jerusalem. Strict Jews like Daniel and his three friends kept the dietary laws peculiar to the Jews, and pious souls prayed and fasted and led clean lives among the heathen. The more patriotic and pious Jews lived according to the laws of their fathers, and longed for a return to the Holy Land. These became intense and outspoken in their hatred of idolatry. The discipline of the Exile brought forth fruit in the chastened characters of the more noble Jews. These encouraged their hearts by the promises given through Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

156. EZEKIEL'S VISION AND CALL

Ezekiel was a priest before he became a prophet. He was carried captive with King Jehoiachin in 598 B.C., and was called to the work of a prophet five years later. He prophesied to the Jewish captives by the river Chebar in lower Babylonia from 593 to 571 B.C.

Ezekiel paints his pictures with much attention to de-

tails. Isaiah preferred to use a few bold strokes that appealed to the imagination. Ezekiel's opening vision, complex and involved as it is, has a grandeur and impressiveness all its own. It is important that the reader should go on to the revelation of Jehovah on the throne above the firmament. It was this vision of Jehovah that caused Ezekiel to fall on his face (Ezek. 1).

Then there came a voice from the throne calling Ezekiel to become a prophet to the children of Israel. Ezekiel must not be afraid of the rebellious people to whom he is sent, though briars and thorns are with him, and he dwells among scorpions. Jehovah says to him: "And thou shalt speak My words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious" (Ezek. 2:1-7).

In vision the prophet saw a roll of a book extended to him, and the command came, "Eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel." The prophet remarks: "Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness" (Ezek. 2:8 to 3:3). This was because the roll contained the words of God, and not because the messages were cheering and pleasing. The prophet is told that Jehovah will make him strong to speak His word with boldness to the rebellious people (Ezek. 3:4-11). The prophet's feelings under the influence of the Spirit are described. He felt himself in the grip of the Almighty. His spirit was bitter and hot within him, as he turned to face his people (Ezek. 3:12-15).

The fearful responsibility of the prophetic watchman is brought home to Ezekiel, as he takes up his work. Every pastor and Christian teacher ought to read the searching words of Jehovah in Ezekiel 3:16-21.

157. EZEKIEL'S MINISTRY PRIOR TO THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

As long as Jerusalem was in the possession of the

people of Judah and the temple worship kept up, the hopes of the patriotic Jews both at home and in Babylonia gathered about the holy city. They could not believe that Jehovah would permit the heathen to destroy His sanctuary. Jeremiah in Jerusalem and Ezekiel in Babylonia warned their people of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and of the utter collapse of the kingdom. From 593 to 587 B.C. Ezekiel's message was one of warning and threat. He tried to brush away the false hopes of a speedy return to the Holy Land. Jerusalem, because of her unparalleled wickedness, is to be given up to famine and the sword. The decree of exile has gone forth from Jehovah. "Make the chain; for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence" (chapters 4 to 7).

As Ezekiel sat in his house in the midst of the elders of Judah, suddenly the hand of the Lord Jehovah fell upon him. The form of a hand seized him by a lock of his hair, and lifted him up between earth and heaven, and brought him to Jerusalem. In this vision God showed him all the sins and crimes practiced by the people still remaining in Jerusalem (chapters 8 to 11).

Ezekiel was fond of symbols. It has been well said that he thought in figures. He performed many symbolic actions that pointed to the capture and destruction of Jerusalem (chapter 12). He denounced the prophets, who daubed with untempered mortar, and the prophetesses, who hunted for souls (chapter 13). Jehovah informs Ezekiel that the presence of Noah, Daniel, and Job in Jerusalem would not cause Him to spare the city (chapter 14). Jerusalem is a worthless, half-consumed vine branch (chapter 15). She is a wanton harlot, and will be humiliated in the presence of her lovers (chapter 16). The covenant-breaking Zedekiah shall not escape (chapter 17). Jehovah will deal with each individual, and not with the nation as a whole. Each man must suffer for his own sins (chapter 18). The prophet

continues his denunciations of wrong in Jerusalem, and repeats his warnings of the approach of the sword in the hands of the king of Babylon. Samaria and Jerusalem are both vile harlots (chapters 19 to 23).

In B.C. 589, as the king of Babylon drew near to the siege of Jerusalem, Ezekiel was commanded to write the name of the day. The Spirit of God gave him knowledge of an event occurring hundreds of miles away. Later on the Jews learned that on the selfsame day named by the prophet the Babylonians invested Jerusalem (24: 1-14).

One day the prophet received a revelation that must have cost him much pain: "Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet thou shalt neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Sigh, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead; bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men." The prophet tells the sad story in a sentence: "So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded" (Ezek. 24: 15-18).

He had to explain his strange conduct to his people, who were presently to have a similar experience (24: 19-27).

158. EZEKIEL'S LATER MINISTRY OF HOPE AND CHEER

As a preliminary to the hopeful teaching concerning the restoration of Israel to divine favor in their own land, the prophet describes the judgments that are to fall upon the proud nations which have oppressed Israel (chapters 25 to 32). He then describes the restoration of Israel and their happy future (chapters 33 to 48).

False shepherds must give way before the Second David (chapter 34). In 34: 15 Jehovah says, "I Myself will be the shepherd of My sheep;" but in 34: 23 He

makes it plain that the Messiah is to be the immediate shepherd in charge of His flock: "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd."

159. EZEKIEL'S DOCTRINE OF INDIVIDUALISM

Ezekiel follows Jeremiah in emphasizing the freedom and the responsibility of each individual soul. He attacks even more sharply than Jeremiah the proverb by which the generation in exile excused themselves and laid the blame on their fathers. "What mean ye," says Ezekiel, "that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" The prophet announces as a general principle: "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him (Ezek. 18:2, 20).

The teaching of Ezekiel in chapters 18 and 33 concerning individual freedom and responsibility may be thus summarized:

(1) No man is necessarily under the dominion of the conduct of his ancestors. He is free to choose for himself. He may turn away from his father's sins, and he may also turn away from his righteous life. A good father may thus have a wicked son; and a wicked father may have a good son. Jehovah will judge the son as an individual separate from his father. Heredity is not an insuperable barrier to one who chooses to be other than his father.

(2) No man is necessarily under the dominion of his own past conduct. He cannot presume on his past goodness; and he ought not to despair by reason of the sins

and follies of his past life. He is free to turn away from his own past. Habit, powerful as it is, cannot bind the man who wills to change.

160. THE NEW HEART

The prophet pleads with his people to turn from their sins and to make for themselves a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 18:31). In such a noble endeavor they can count on the help of Jehovah; for He takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner. "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33:11). Jehovah will renew the nature of all who wish to be free from the dominion of sin. Ezekiel encourages his fellow exiles with the promise of a new heart: "and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (11:19, 20).

161. EZEKIEL THE PROPHET OF HOPE

Ezekiel describes the wonders of Jehovah's grace. His people, whose bones are bleaching in the valley, are restored to life by the power of God; and Israel and Judah are reunited under the Messianic King (chapter 37). A glorious vista of hope is opened by the promise, "and David My servant shall be their prince forever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them" (37:25, 26).

The foes of Jehovah's people may assemble all their forces; but ultimate defeat awaits them. Jehovah will protect His people (chapters 38, 39).

One of the most hopeful passages in all the Bible is

the description of the transformation of the Wady of Fire and of the Dead Sea by the life-giving stream that takes its rise beside Jehovah's altar and flows thence in ever-increasing volume, until it makes the sea of death a picture of life and prosperity (Ezek. 47:1-12). So shall it be with the religion of Jehovah. The life-giving stream will finally transform all the drought and desolation and death of this sinful world into a scene of life and prosperity and peace.

162. DANIEL'S PIETY AND PROMOTION

Daniel was taken into captivity in 605 B.C., the year in which Nebuchadrezzar first invaded Syria and Palestine. He was put in training along with his three Hebrew friends in the royal university in Babylon. He was to be educated for the king's service. The young Jew resolved to live according to the law of Jehovah in Babylon, just as he had always done in Judah. We are told that "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank" (Dan. 1:8). It was not easy to gain his request to be fed only with vegetables; but after a test had been made, he and his three friends were found to be in better physical condition than the youths who ate of the king's dainties. Moreover they made such progress in their studies that they surpassed all their fellows in wisdom and understanding, and so were appointed to stand before the king (chapter 1).

163. DANIEL FAMOUS FOR WISDOM

Because of his prophetic visions, we are apt to think of Daniel as a prophet; but in his own day he was most renowned for wisdom (Ezek. 28:3; Dan. 1:20; 2:48; 4:9; 5:10-12). He was not only an interpreter of dreams, but also a wise statesman and governor. He

was not merely a student of books and of the mysteries of the world, but a man among men, a leader in the world's work. His influence was thrown on the side of justice and of kindness. He sought the highest good of all men. His record was such that no fault could be found with his administration.

Daniel's wisdom was not all the fruit of study. Jehovah revealed through him the course of history for centuries to come. Daniel himself expressly ascribes to God the wisdom with which he interpreted dreams and foretold future events (2:28).

164. MIRACLES OF DELIVERANCE

The Book of Daniel contains several of the greatest stories of the supernatural deliverance of individuals to be found in the Bible. They are so familiar to old and young alike that we need only to name them. First comes the preservation of the three Hebrews in the fiery furnace (chapter 3); then the insanity and the restoration of Nebuchadnezzar (chapter 4), and finally the story of Daniel in the lions' den (chapter 6).

We cannot always give an explanation of God's dealings with men; but it is plain that the Exile was a critical period in the history of redemption. The heathen world seemed to be triumphant over Jehovah and His captive people. It was a suitable time for the God of Israel to work wonders on behalf of His exiles.

165. THE FUTURE UNVEILED

Most of Daniel's work as a prophet was in the field of prediction. He did not preach, like Amos and Isaiah and Jeremiah. He was a counselor of kings and an administrative officer rather than a prophet. But Daniel made many predictions. His writings are apocalypses, or revelations of the future.

Two of the greatest predictions Daniel ever made are those contained in Daniel 2:44 and 7:13, 14. Jehovah's kingdom shall stand forever.

Daniel describes the physical effects of the great revelations made to him (7:15; 8:15-18; 10:7-11). He was sometimes overwhelmed and made weak by what he saw.

166. REWARDS OF THE SOUL-WINNERS

Not even Daniel himself understood fully the visions which he describes. Time has made clear the meaning of some of them, while others are still interpreted differently by different minds. But the great promise to winners of souls is intelligible to all. It is founded on the revelation of the resurrection. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. 12:2, 3). The doctrine of the resurrection is here clearly taught. The Christian Scriptures make it plain that *all* that sleep in the dust of earth shall awake, thus completing the fragmentary and progressive revelation through the prophets of the Old Testament. Soul-winners do well to be earnest and patient; for the issues are eternal.

167. PSALMS OF THE EXILE

Psalms 74 and 79 seem to refer to the burning of the city and of the temple by the Chaldeans. They voice the grief of pious and patriotic Jews over the destruction of the sanctuary.

Psalm 137 expresses the passionate devotion of one of the exiles to Jerusalem and her worship. He prays that her bitter foes may be requited for their cruelty.

Psalm 102 is the prayer of an afflicted soul on the eve of the return from the Exile (Psa. 102:12-14). The psalmist looks forward to the time

“When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve Jehovah.”

The Psalter perhaps contains other prayers and hymns composed during the Exile. Historians and sages were also at work among the captives.

The knowledge of the religion of Jehovah was spread abroad in the Babylonian Empire. The glory of Jehovah as the God of faithfulness and love and holiness was already dawning upon the world's great minds. The Exile put Jehovah's worshipers in the midst of the heathen. God made this contact a blessing both to Jew and to Gentile.

Chapter XIII

THE RESTORATION

THE long night of the Exile at length came to an end. The promises of Jehovah through Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel were about to be fulfilled. The Babylonian supremacy had given place to the rule of a liberal-minded king from Anshan, known to us as Cyrus the Great. Babylon fell into his hands in 538 B.C. Two years later he takes the reins of government into his own hands, and devises ways and means for the pacification of his new subjects and for the strengthening of his throne.

168. THE PROCLAMATION OF CYRUS

About 536 B.C., Cyrus issued the following proclamation: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all His people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel, (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:2-4).

It was once thought that Cyrus was a monotheist, and that he may have come to recognize Jehovah as the true

God; but the decipherment of the inscriptions of Cyrus has revealed him as a polytheist courting the favor of all the gods. He was a mild ruler governing according to higher standards than had prevailed before him. It was part of his policy to let captive peoples return to their former homes; and he sought the favor of the deities by rebuilding their temples and restoring their worship.

169. THE RETURN TO JERUSALEM

More than forty-two thousand Jews responded to the proclamation of Cyrus and prepared to return to their land. They also took with them more than seven thousand servants. The entire caravan numbered nearly fifty thousand souls. Their leaders were Zerubbabel (or Sheshbazzar) the prince and Jeshua the high priest. They made the journey in safety and settled in Judah (Ezra 1, 2).

Many Jews remained in Babylonia, some because they had given up faith in Jehovah, and many because of business interests. Some of them probably returned to Jerusalem as soon as they could sell their property at a fair price. The Jews of the Dispersion were perhaps as devout and conscientious as those who returned to Judah. They were more liberal and humane.

170. TRIALS AND DISCOURAGEMENTS

The people who returned from Exile found much to discourage them on their return to Judah. The land was desolate and Jerusalem in ruins. They tried to encourage their hearts by observing the feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month. Next year (534 B.C.) they laid the foundation of the temple with shouts and praises. The old men who had seen the temple of Solomon in its glory wept when they thought of its superior-

ity to any house they could now hope to build (Ezra 3).

There were many heathen in Judah and in the districts adjacent, and these now came forward with a request that they be allowed to join the people of Judah in building the temple. Had they come with a sincere desire to honor Jehovah and to help His people, it would have been wrong to decline their offer; but the leaders of the Jews knew that these heathen would not worship Jehovah according to the Law. The admission of foreigners to the temple would bring discord into their worship. Hence they flatly refused to accept the aid of their heathen neighbors. As a natural consequence, they incurred their enmity. "Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building" (Ezra 4:1-5). No doubt many of the Jews almost wished that they had remained with their brethren in Babylonia.

171. HAGGAI URGES THAT THE TEMPLE BE REBUILT

For fourteen years the discouraged people of Judah let the work on the temple cease. In 520 B.C. Haggai came to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the high priest, with a rebuke for the people for neglecting the house of Jehovah, while building and beautifying their own houses. Jehovah had sent drought as a punishment for their selfishness (Haggai 1:1-11).

Zerubbabel and Joshua and the remnant of the people obeyed the voice of Jehovah through Haggai the prophet, and resumed work on the temple (Haggai 1:12-15). Jehovah encourages them to go forward and complete the temple, promising to supply them with money enough. Let them not lose heart when they remember the beauty and glory of Solomon's temple. "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jeho-

vah of hosts" (Haggai 2:1-9). Jehovah promises blessing to the people, because they have gone to work on His sanctuary. He will bestow a special blessing upon Zerubbabel, the leader in the work (Haggai 2:10-23).

172. ZECHARIAH ENCOURAGES THE BUILDERS

Two months after Haggai began to preach to the people about rebuilding the temple (520 B.C.) the word of Jehovah came to Zechariah, a young man in Jerusalem, and he presently spoke words of encouragement to the builders.

Zechariah received his revelations in connection with a series of visions, all of which were encouraging to the people at work on the temple. Jehovah's horsemen have been among the nations on a tour of inspection; He is getting ready to show mercy to Jerusalem and to rebuild His temple (Zech. 1:7-17). Judah's oppressors are about to be broken (1:18-21). The nations will one day be gathered in to be the people of Jehovah, and Jerusalem shall be filled with inhabitants (chapter 2). The high priest shall be forgiven, cleansed, and anointed (chapter 3). Zerubbabel, whose hands have laid the foundations of the sanctuary, shall also finish it. He will overcome all obstacles through the Spirit's help (chapter 4). A curse is pronounced on the thief and the liar; and wickedness is banished to her proper seat in Babylon (chapter 5). The high priest is crowned. The Branch of Jehovah will unite in Himself the royal and the priestly lines (chapter 6). The fasts of exilic days will be converted into days of joy and gladness (chapters 7, 8).

The preaching of Haggai and Zechariah was eminently successful. "And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo" (Ezra 6:14).

The sanctuary was finished in four years, and was dedicated with joy in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:14-22).

173. THE LATER MINISTRY OF ZECHARIAH

Zechariah probably lived for many years after the building and dedication of the second temple. Jehovah gave him important messages concerning Israel and the heathen powers that were near Israel. Zechariah uses the term *Israel* to designate the people who had returned, whether they were of Judah or of other tribes.

These later chapters of Zechariah are especially rich in Messianic prophecies. Thus the entry of Zion's lowly King is described in 9:9, 10; the mourning over the Pierced One in 12:10-14; the smiting of the Shepherd and the scattering of the flock in 13:7.

Jerusalem, after terrible chastisement, is to be transformed, and, under the protection of Jehovah, shall be the center of worship for the world. Everything becomes holy in Jerusalem, the secular being merged into the sacred (chapter 14).

174. ESTHER SAVES HER PEOPLE

The story of Esther belongs to the reign of Xerxes, the vainglorious Persian king who was defeated by the Greeks at Salamis in 480 B.C. On his return to Persia, he gave himself up to the pleasures of his palace. Then it was that Esther was chosen as his favorite in the place of Vashti (Esther 1, 2). We next learn how the Jews fell under the ban of extermination (chapters 3 to 5); and finally how danger was turned into deliverance through the skill and courage of Esther (chapters 6 to 10).

The story of Esther inculcates patriotism. It has always been a favorite story with the Jews. The doctrine

of Providence is admirably taught without a single occurrence of the name of God in the book.

175. EZRA LEADS A CARAVAN TO JERUSALEM

The Jews in the Holy Land had many trials and discouragements in the years that followed the return from captivity. Even after the temple had been rebuilt and the ritual worship resumed, there were still many discouragements. The colony was hardly strong enough to protect itself against its heathen neighbors. It must have been exceedingly gratifying to have a reënforcement of earnest men from among the Jews still remaining in Babylonia.

Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of Moses. He was zealous for the customs peculiar to Israel. He resolved to lead a caravan from Babylon to Jerusalem to strengthen the hands of the faithful in the Holy City. As Ezra was in favor at court, he could have had a strong escort of Persian horsemen for the asking; but he was ashamed to make the request, because he had told the king that Jehovah was a God who protected His worshipers. He secured a decree from Artaxerxes granting him authority to conduct a caravan to Jerusalem, and to preside over the administration of affairs in Judah (Ezra 7:1 to 8:30). The journey was made in safety, and Ezra deposited in the temple the rich presents he brought from Babylon (8:31-36). These events occurred in 458 B.C.

176. EZRA'S REFORMATION

Ezra was greatly distressed when he learned that the people of Judah were intermarrying with their heathen neighbors. Heathen customs were thus coming in among the people, and the chosen nation was fast losing its peculiarity as a people separate from all others. Ezra

was overcome with astonishment and grief when the facts were brought to his attention. He rent his robe, plucked off the hair of his head and of his beard, and sat down astonished. Soon a great crowd assembled about him to see what would be done.

In the middle of the afternoon Ezra arose, fell upon his knees, and confessed aloud the sins of his people. "Now while Ezra prayed, and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there was gathered together unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children; for the people wept very sore." Shecaniah proposed a reformation, urging Ezra to take the lead in the movement. Ezra at once took an oath of the leaders that they would do as Shecaniah had said.

A proclamation was made that all the people of Judah should assemble at Jerusalem, and that failure to come would be punished by confiscation of goods and expulsion from the congregation. Owing to the cold and the winter rains, the people were allowed to return to their homes. Certain men were appointed to supervise the work of separating the heathen women from the people. Within two months the work was completed (Ezra 9, 10).

177. NEHEMIAH REBUILDS THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

In 445 B.C. Nehemiah, who was the cupbearer of Artaxerxes of Persia, inquired as to the condition of Jerusalem and of the Jews who had returned home. He was greatly disturbed to learn that there was no wall around the city, and that the people were in great affliction and reproach. He fasted and prayed on behalf of his people, and resolved to undertake the task of fortifying the Holy City (Neh. 1).

Nehemiah secured permission from Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem and rebuild its wall. He obtained letters

to the governors west of the Euphrates, and also a letter to the keeper of the king's forest, that he should give him all the timber he might need. The journey was made in safety (Neh. 2:1-11). After a rest of three days, Nehemiah inspected the wall secretly in the night. When he had all the facts in hand, he assembled the people and urged them to arise and build the wall of the city, informing them of the king's permission to do so. They responded with alacrity that they would do it. Sanballat and Tobiah and the other enemies of the Jews scoffed at the movement (Neh. 2).

Nehemiah distributed the people along the entire wall, giving to each group of laborers a definite portion to repair (chapter 3). Sanballat tried to stop the work; but Nehemiah checkmated him (chapter 4).

In this busy and critical time Nehemiah had to face a serious financial problem. He organized his forces skillfully, and broke up the custom of charging interest and taking mortgages (chapter 5). In the face of opposition within and without the city he pushed the wall to completion in fifty-two days (chapter 6).

178. A GREAT REVIVAL

The completion of the city wall put new hope and confidence into the hearts of the people of Jerusalem. They came together as one man into the broad place before the water gate, and requested Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses and read to them.

From a pulpit of wood Ezra read in the hearing of all the people from early morning until noon. All were attentive, both men and women and children old enough to understand. The Levites assisted in making the people understand what was read. It was not a merely formal reading, but an effort to teach the people the meaning of God's Word. Soon the people were in tears; for they had not obeyed the commandments of Jehovah.

Nehemiah and Ezra urged them rather to rejoice and make a feast, reminding them to send portions to those who had nothing.

On the following day the people returned to hear the law again. When they heard the command to observe the feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month, they decided to obey the commandment at once, as it was the season for the feast. Every day they returned for further study of the book of the law of God (Neh. 8).

The revival culminated in a renewal of the covenant with Jehovah (Neh. 9, 10). It was thought appropriate to dedicate the city wall, which had been completed by Nehemiah in the face of great difficulties and dangers (Neh. 12:27-43). Provision was made for the collection of the tithes for the Levites (Neh. 12:44-47).

179. A VIGOROUS REFORMER

On his return from the court of Persia (shortly after 433 B.C.), Nehemiah cleansed the temple, casting out the household goods of Tobiah the Ammonite. He also compelled the people to bring in the tithe for the support of the Levites. Sabbath desecration he broke up by threatening to lay hands on those who traded on the Sabbath. Intermarriage with the heathen he forbade, punishing severely some who had taken foreign wives. In all things he acted with vigor.

Modern reformers may learn many lessons from Nehemiah. We name the following:

- (1) Watch and pray.
- (2) Work and pray.
- (3) Stick to your main work.
- (4) Cultivate sanctified common sense.

180. MALACHI'S TRUMPET CALL TO REFORM

Malachi was probably contemporary with Nehemiah,

inasmuch as he rebukes the same evils which disturbed Jewish social life in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

The people offered blind and lame animals in sacrifice on Jehovah's altar, thus insulting their God. He will accept no such worthless offerings. "Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain!" (Mal. 1). The priests are also at fault in accepting such contemptible offerings. They have departed far from Jehovah's ideal for the priesthood (2:1-9).

The prophet attacks the custom of divorcing Jewish wives and taking heathen women in their place. Jehovah hates divorce (2:10-16). The accusation that Jehovah favors the wicked will cease when He draws near to judgment against sorcerers and adulterers and false swearers and oppressors (2:17 to 3:6). Judah robs God by withholding the tithe that should support His ministers (3:7-12). The separation between the righteous and the wicked shall certainly come (3:13 to 4:3).

Malachi's last word urges the people to keep the law of Moses and wait for the forerunner of the King (4:4-6).

181. OTHER LITERATURE OF THE RESTORATION

Many psalms were composed in this period. See Psalms 85, 118, 119, 126, 146-150. The Psalter became the hymnal of the Jews of the Restoration. Perhaps the sages also added to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes is put in this period by almost all recent scholars. The Books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther were composed in this latest period of the Old Testament. Daniel is placed at the beginning of the period by conservative scholars and toward the end by radical critics.

182. A GLANCE FORWARD

There is a gap between the Old Testament and the New. The Judaism of Ezra and Nehemiah is not the legalism of the Pharisees in the time of our Lord. The Maccabean struggle for a generation after 167 B.C. was a period in which the parties of later Judaism took their rise. The liberal Jews became more lax, and the strict became more exclusive. The letter of the law killed the spirit. The weightier matters, such as justice and mercy, were forgotten in the effort to tithe mint, anise, and cummin.

Into this legalistic circle there came One who taught that *love* was the central word in the Old Testament. He found in Genesis and Deuteronomy and Isaiah and the Psalms rich revelations of the character of God, and ethical and religious teaching which will inspire and guide men to the end of time. Because He held the Old Testament in high esteem as a revelation of the Father's will, we also come to it for instruction in righteousness.

Chapter XIV

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE BIBLE

THE Bible is a history of Redemption. It is not a history of the world, nor even a history of the Hebrew people. Whatever bears on the redemption of sinful man finds a place in the Bible. All else, however interesting and valuable for other purposes, is passed by in silence.

I. THE BEGINNINGS

The first eleven chapters of Genesis lie at the foundation of the Bible. They tell us that God created the universe; that man, the crowning work of the creation, at first enjoyed fellowship with God; that the old serpent tempted our first parents and led them into sin; that God announced final victory to the seed of the woman in the long struggle with the serpent; that sin grew among men until God felt impelled to destroy all the race except one righteous family; that sin continued among the descendants of Noah, the progenitor of all the families and nations of earth. This foundation section of the Bible leads up to the birth of Abram, whom Jehovah elects to be a blessing to all the world. It covers far more time than all the remainder of the Bible; perhaps far more than the common chronology would suggest.

II. THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD

God makes a new era to begin with Abraham, the father of believers. Rich revelations of the character

and purposes of Jehovah are made to Abraham and his descendants. The inspired writer portrays the patriarch's life and character vividly and fully. In the history of redemption Abraham holds a large place. The lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are also exceedingly instructive. God waited a long time while His plans were maturing, and then advanced His redemptive purpose rapidly through the great patriarchs. Genesis is truly one of the world's great books.

III. THE ERA OF MOSES AND JOSHUA

The family of Jacob had grown into a nation in Egypt. They are enslaved by the Egyptians and sorely oppressed. Jehovah calls Moses to be the deliverer, leader, and lawgiver of Israel. The character of Jehovah is revealed in much of its glory through Moses. The chosen nation is placed under the dominion of righteous statutes and ordinances. The ethical character of Jehovah becomes the model after which His people are to shape their lives. Much redemptive teaching is wrapped up in the symbols and types of the Mosaic Law.

Moses led Israel to the borders of the Promised Land. It was reserved for Joshua to conquer Canaan and to assign to the various tribes their inheritance. The era began with Israel in bondage in a foreign land; it closed with Israel in possession of a land flowing with milk and honey. Israel is called to be a holy nation, and to this chosen nation are intrusted the oracles of God. Jehovah redeemed Israel by a mighty arm from the bondage of Egypt. He claims Israel as His own personal property. He is Israel's king. Through Israel He wishes to reveal His character and purposes to all mankind.

The life and work of Moses are described in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Joshua gives

an account of the conquest of Canaan and of the allotment of the land among the tribes of Israel. During this period the Pentateuch was written.

IV. THE PERIOD OF THE JUDGES

After the death of Joshua, heathenism repeatedly attacked and threatened to engulf the religion of Abraham and Moses. Here we come to the Dark Ages of Israel's history. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. Even the best men of the time were on a plane far below that on which Moses and Joshua and their associates had lived. It looked as if the knowledge of Jehovah's character might fade from the minds of men. But there were a few faithful souls who kept alive the knowledge of the holy and merciful God. Samuel, the last of the Judges, became the first of a long line of prophets. Under the guiding hand of Samuel a great revival breaks out, and Israel comes into an era of political power and of moral and spiritual energy.

The story of the period is told in Judges, Ruth, and 1 Samuel 1-7. The Book of Joshua was probably composed in this period.

V. THE UNITED KINGDOM

Under Samuel the transition from a pure Theocracy to a Constitutional Monarchy is made. An earthly king is seated on Jehovah's throne over Israel. When Saul proves a failure, Jehovah chooses a man after His own heart and places David on the throne. David as king becomes significant in the revelation of Jehovah's redemptive purpose. The promise of God attaches itself to David's house. The Ideal King of the future will be a second David.

Perhaps David's harp was more important to the plan of Redemption than his scepter. Through the many

psalms which he composed he has brought men of all succeeding ages into a closer fellowship with God.

Solomon contributed out of his stores of worldly wisdom many proverbs to guide the young to success and honor.

The period of the United Kingdom was one in which real advance was made in the redemptive plan of Jehovah. Prophets and psalmists and sages united in promoting faith and morality and spirituality in Israel. Times of reaction and moral declension may be traced in the later history of Israel, but never any long period in which Israel is without prophets or other leaders to keep alive the knowledge of Jehovah.

The account of the events of this period is found in 1 Samuel 8 to 1 Kings 11; also in 1 Chronicles 10 to 2 Chronicles 9. Judges, Ruth, and 1 and 2 Samuel were probably composed in this period; also many psalms and proverbs and the Song of Solomon.

VI. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

The taxes were heavy under Solomon. His foolish son refused to make them lighter, and the northern tribes revolted. This brings us to the period of the Divided Kingdom (931-587 B.C.). In 722 B.C., Samaria was captured by the Assyrians, and the kingdom of Israel (or Ephraim) ceased to be. The kingdom of Judah was destroyed by Nebuchadrezzar in 587 B.C. and the people carried captive to Babylonia. As early as 605 B.C., captives were taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. Daniel and others were carried into exile in that year. In 598 B.C. Jehoiachin and many of his people were transported to Babylon.

The ministry of Elijah and Elisha in the Northern Kingdom made memorable the period from 870 B.C. to 800 B.C. In Judah, Obadiah and Joel were probably contemporary with Elisha. Jonah, shortly after 800

B.C., prophesied first to his own people and then to heathen Nineveh. Amos (about 760 B.C.) thundered at Bethel against the sins of Israel, and Hosea (about 750-725 B.C.) pleaded with Israel to return to Jehovah. In Judah, Isaiah and Micah filled the period from 740 to 695 B.C. with brilliant ministries. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah made prophecy a mighty power in the eighth century B.C. To Isaiah it was given to picture the Messianic King in His glory and to describe the character and achievements of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. Hezekiah, one of Judah's best kings, led his people to turn from idols to the worship of Jehovah. Isaiah and Micah found in him a sympathetic hearer.

With the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C., the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes passed away. No doubt pious individuals of these tribes later united with their brethren of Judah, so that the Ten Tribes were not wholly lost to history.

After the death of Hezekiah and Isaiah, Judah lapsed into gross idolatry under Manasseh. There was a notable reformation under Josiah about 623 B.C. Jehovah raised up a group of faithful prophets at this crisis. Nahum (about 640-630 B.C.) announced the approaching downfall of cruel Nineveh. Zephaniah (about 630-625 B.C.) described the terrible day of Jehovah's wrath against sin, but predicted that a remnant both of Jews and Gentiles would be saved. Habakkuk (about 609-600 B.C.) gave voice to the longing for justice in a time of oppression. Jeremiah commenced about 628 B.C. a faithful ministry that was continued in the face of multiplied discouragements and dangers until after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. He announced the transition to a new era in which Jehovah would write His law, not on tables of stone, but on the hearts of His people. He preached the doctrine of individualism. God will deal with each person as a separate entity. The Kingdom of God as represented by the people of Judah as a nation was about to go to

pieces, but only as a preparation for a higher stage in the history of Redemption. The spirituality of the Kingdom of God received new and helpful interpretation from Jeremiah. Long before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., Jeremiah had committed to writing the substance of Jehovah's messages through him. The roll of his prophecies was completed in the early years of the Babylonian Exile. During the discouraging experiences of the Exile devout men were heartened by his earnest words, and the spiritual element kept alive the hope of ultimate victory for the people of Jehovah.

During this long period the singers of Israel made additions to the Psalter, and the sages continued to put forth proverbs embodying worldly wisdom. It is possible that the author of the Book of Job lived in this period. Of the writing prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah certainly belong in this period; and it seems to the writer that Obadiah, Joel, and Jonah should be placed in the early part of this period.

VII. THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

As already stated, the Exile was a process beginning in 605 B.C. with the captivity of Daniel and others, continuing with the captivity of Jehoiachin in 598 B.C., and leading up to the great captivity at the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

Ezekiel, a priest carried off with Jehoiachin in 598 B.C., was called to prophesy in 593 B.C. among the captives by the river Chebar in lower Babylonia. He continued his ministry until 571 B.C. Through Ezekiel Jehovah emphasized the doctrine of individual responsibility. Every man is treated justly, and every man is a separate entity before God. He may even break away from his own past life, and will be judged as he is, and not as he was before he changed his course. Ezekiel is a prophet

of hope, picturing the growth of the kingdom of God in his image of the stream of life-giving waters that issued from under the altar of God.

Daniel as a statesman and wise man gave his testimony before kings and courts. God also made through him wonderful disclosures of the future struggles of Jehovah's people. Daniel teaches the doctrine of the resurrection of individuals to everlasting life or everlasting shame, and gives a great promise to soul-winners.

During the Exile were composed the Books of 1 and 2 Kings; Jeremiah (completed), Lamentations, and Ezekiel.

VIII. FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE MACCABEAN REVOLT

The return from captivity had been foretold by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. When Cyrus conquered Babylon, he gave permission to the Jews to return to their own land and to rebuild their temple. In 535 B.C. Zerubbabel led a company of about fifty thousand exiles back to Palestine. The worship of Jehovah through sacrifices was resumed, and plans were laid for rebuilding the temple; but, owing to opposition from their heathen neighbors, the work was discontinued for fourteen years. Then Jehovah sent Haggai and Zechariah, in 520 B.C., to stir up the spirits of the rulers of the people to undertake the task of building the temple. The work was completed in 516 B.C., and the temple was dedicated with joy.

Many Jews remained in Babylon and Persia. The Book of Esther relates how, in the reign of Xerxes (about 478 B.C.), the Jews of the world were threatened with extermination, and how they were saved by the intercession of Esther.

In 458 B.C., Artaxerxes gave Ezra permission to lead a caravan of Jews from Persia to Jerusalem. Ezra came

to Jerusalem and wrought important reforms among the people.

In 445 B.C., Nehemiah, the cupbearer of Artaxerxes, asked permission to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the walls of the city. He accomplished his difficult task speedily, in spite of many serious dangers. On his return from Persia, about 432 B.C., he wrought several important reforms in Jerusalem. He was a wise and efficient governor. Ezra and Nehemiah coöperated to keep the Jews separate from the heathen world, which threatened to assimilate them to its low religious and moral life. Ezra and Nehemiah paved the way for the development of Judaism.

The prophet Malachi was probably contemporary with Nehemiah, as he attacks the abuses which Nehemiah overthrew in Judah.

The Jews continued under the comparatively mild Persian rule until 331 B.C., when they passed under the yoke of Alexander the Great. From 320 to 198 B.C. the Jews were subject to the Ptolemies of Egypt. Then they became subject to Antiochus the Great of Syria, and continued tributary to Syria until the revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. Mattathias and his brave sons led their countrymen in a desperate struggle for the right to worship God according to the laws of Moses. They refused to become hellenized and heathenized.

During the period from 535 B.C. to 166 B.C. were composed the prophetic Books of Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; the historical Books, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther; also some Psalms, and probably Ecclesiastes, which describes the lessons to be learned from Solomon's experiences. Several of the Apocryphal Books, such as Tobit and Ecclesiasticus, were also composed in this period.

IX. FROM THE MACCABEAN REVOLT TO THE BIRTH OF
JESUS

For this period we are dependent upon sources other than the Bible. From 1 Maccabees and Josephus we learn that the Maccabees, after many battles, won independence for the Jews. Native kings and queens once more ruled over the Jewish people. But in 63 B.C. Pompey captured Jerusalem, and in 37 B.C. Herod the Great became king, and held the office until after the birth of our Lord. The chronology computed in later times seems clearly to have put the birth of Jesus about five years too late. Hence modern chronologers usually assign that event to 5 B.C.

During this period the Jewish sects developed, so that in the New Testament we hear of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Judaism hardened into Pharisaic legalism.

X. THE LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS

Here we come to the heart of the Bible. Fortunately the story is so familiar that we do not need to repeat it. Our Lord's public ministry probably lasted a little over three years. After the early Judean ministry He passed through Samaria to enter upon the great Galilean ministry, which took Him three times over that populous district. Then He withdrew into the region of Tyre and Sidon and other districts around Galilee. During the last six months He seems to have visited all parts of the land on both sides of the Jordan. Then came the discourses of the last week, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and after forty days the ascension.

Jesus wrote no books, but He promised the Twelve the gift of the Holy Spirit that He might bring to their remembrance the words they had heard from His lips. Never man spake like this man. Jesus Christ made atonement for sin on the cross. In Him were fulfilled the

Scriptures of the Old Testament. All the New Testament sets forth His life and death and resurrection as the hope of the world. Whatever in the Bible has no relation to Him may be safely ignored—but take care lest the relation be missed through inattention.

XI. LABORS OF PETER AND OF HIS ASSOCIATES

(Chiefly among the Jews.)

The most probable date for the ascension of our Lord is the late spring of 30 A.D. Ten days later the Holy Spirit fell with mighty power on the disciples in the upper room. In one day three thousand souls were converted to personal acceptance of Jesus as Christ and Saviour. The progress of the revival thus begun is sketched in the early chapters of the Acts. Of course, the adversary stirred up opposition and persecution, but the church grew wonderfully. The believer found the gospel sufficient for all his needs. Years passed by. The apostles seem to have forgotten the command to make disciples of all the nations. Suddenly persecution becomes more violent, and the believers are scattered abroad, preaching, however, as they journey.

God calls Peter to receive into the church the first Gentile converts. Presently others are won at Antioch through the labors of other men. Meantime Saul of Tarsus has been converted to the new faith. He is busy preaching and teaching in Cilicia, the province in which he was born. Fourteen or fifteen years have passed away since our Lord left the earth, and the time is ripe for a great ingathering of the Gentiles. The gospel of Christ has been tested by many, and it has stood the test.

XII. MISSIONARY LABORS OF PAUL AND OF HIS ASSOCIATES

(Gentiles and Jews.)

Barnabas, seeing that there was a great door opened in Antioch, went forth to Tarsus to seek Saul. He found his man and brought him face to face with a great opportunity. These were busy days in Antioch. Presently the Holy Spirit designated Barnabas and Saul for work on a wider field. Then follows the great missionary journey to Cyprus, Pisidia, and Lycaonia. Many converts are won from among the Gentiles. Now the question is raised whether Gentiles becoming Christians should not also become Jews and keep the law of Moses. At the Council in Jerusalem in A.D. 50, Gentile freedom was won, largely through the efforts of Paul and Barnabas.

About 48 or 50 A.D., it is supposed, James wrote his Epistle.

In A.D. 51-54 followed the second missionary journey. Paul and Silas were called into Macedonia, and thence into Greece. From Corinth, in A.D. 52 or 53, Paul wrote the two letters to the Thessalonians.

During the period from A.D. 54 to A.D. 58, Paul was engaged in the third missionary journey, spending much time at Ephesus. Toward the close of this campaign he wrote a group of great letters, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. This group belongs to the years 57 and 58 A.D.

Finally Paul falls into the hands of his enemies, and lies in prison at Cæsarea for two long years. Then he goes to Rome as a prisoner. During his confinement in Rome he probably wrote Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians, another group of great letters.

It seems that Paul finally was released, and had opportunity to resume his missionary labors. But once more he was arrested, about A.D. 67, and is said to have suffered martyrdom in A.D. 68. During his last im-

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prisonment he wrote 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy.

Hebrews is probably not directly from the hand of Paul, although reminding one a good deal of the great Apostle. It was probably composed between 60 and 70 A.D.

1 Peter, Jude, and 2 Peter probably date from 65 to 67 A.D.

Mark, Matthew, and Luke probably wrote the Gospels bearing their names before A.D. 70, though some good scholars think them later.

XIII. CLOSING LABORS OF JOHN AND OF HIS ASSOCIATES

When Peter and Paul passed away, John, the beloved disciple, became easily the foremost Christian in the world. He was great and influential while these mighty men lived, but he seems to have been willing to yield to Peter as spokesman. John is said to have lived to a ripe old age in Ephesus. For a while he was exiled to Patmos. Between A.D. 80 and A.D. 95 he probably wrote the Gospel of John, the three Epistles of John, and the Revelation. The heart of God is revealed in these writings. They form a fitting close and climax to the revelation contained in the Bible. The ultimate triumph of Christ over all foes is predicted in the Revelation. God's plan of redemption will not fail. The Son of God shall reign forever. Satan shall be locked up in the bottomless pit, no more to tempt the saints.

The Bible is a unity. The style and manner of each book contain elements that give it a right to a place in God's great Book. Every part of the Book contains the red blood of Redemption. The Bible is an organism. Cut it and it will bleed. It contains the progressive revelation of God's will. Holy men wrote it as they were borne along by the Spirit of God.

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