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Altars and Sanctuaries in the Old Testament.

BY THE REVEREND CANON J. BATTERSBY HARFORD, M.A., B.D., RIPON.

I.

THE question at issue between the older and the modern schools of Biblical interpretation may be thus expressed: Was the whole Pentateuchal Law, with its elaborate and stately paraphernalia and ritual, given to Israel before the tribes crossed the Jordan, or did the Law grow up little by little from a Mosaic nucleus, and attain its present form, only when the Israelites were subjects of a foreign power?

The former of these two views is presented to us by the post-exilic writers of the Old Testament itself. It may seem paradoxical to say that the second view can and does equally claim Biblical authority, and yet that is the literal truth. This is so because the Hebrew historian was, as a rule, a compiler. He selected from older documents passages which he deemed worthy of preservation, and transferred them bodily to his own pages. In the Books of Chronicles we can easily recognize a number of such extracted passages, because we still have the Books of Samuel and Kings, from which they were taken. Again, in these earlier books, it is easy to distinguish an editorial framework, with its later point of view, from the main body of narratives taken from still earlier sources. It is the study of the earlier passages in the historical books and of the contemporary prophetic writings which has compelled so many to revise their view of the history of law and worship in Israel.

It is just fifty years ago this year (1878) that Julius Wellhausen, then a young Professor at Greifswald, published *The History of Israel*, vol. i. (which was reissued in 1883 as *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*). The title was significant. Wellhausen began with the study of the religious institutions as seen in the historical books, and argued that the references found therein could only be understood when it was realized that the Levitical Law in its present form was compiled after the Exile and not before. So powerful was the argument that practically the whole body of younger scholars accepted this position, and the 'Wellhausen theory' has long been dominant in the Universities of Europe.

Champions of the older view have, however, from time to time challenged 'the new Orthodoxy.' Of these perhaps the most vigorous is Mr. Harold Wiener. His self-confident language and the tone

of contempt for those who differ from him, which he is apt to adopt, lead those who read his articles without having any independent knowledge of the facts or of the writers he is attacking, to conclude that he has triumphantly refuted Wellhausen and all his school. This is emphatically not the case. In a recent series of articles, entitled 'Since Wellhausen' (*Expositor*, July-December 1925; reprinted 1926¹), I endeavoured to review impartially the criticisms of various writers, including Mr. Wiener, with special reference to the *literary* analysis of the Pentateuch, and came to the conclusion that the analysis into four documents stood essentially unshaken. In the last two of these articles I went further, and dealt also with the historical dating of Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code. In the following new series of articles I propose to carry the argument still further, and to review attacks from the same quarter which deal more particularly with the history of worship in Israel, and to estimate their worth in the light of a fresh survey of the relevant facts.

In order that we may fully understand both the attack and the defence, it is essential that at the outset we should have a clear conception of what Wellhausen's line of argument was. In the first two articles, therefore, I give a sketch of that argument, confining myself to those portions which are of primary importance, and expressing it largely in my own way. In the remaining four articles I deal with Wiener's counter-theory, and present a detailed statement of the evidence for and against. The argument will centre round two questions: Were sacrifice and slaughter in Old Israel normally coincident? Was there one legitimate sanctuary only in the same period, or were there many?

I.

HISTORY AND LAW.

The method by which we are to try to solve the problem, which is indicated in the opening sentence of this article, is an historical one.

¹ Obtainable from the author, 8 The Crescent, Ripon; or from W. F. Henderson, 19 George IV. Bridge, Edinburgh. 2s. net, post free.

(A) We shall take up the historical and prophetic books, and ask what evidence they afford as to the actual practices of worship developed at different periods throughout the whole history of Israel. It is essential that we should approach the study of the books without any *a priori* suppositions as to what we ought to find there. The question at issue being whether the full Levitical Law was in existence in the time of Joshua, or was not, obviously we must not, before starting on our studies, in any way assume that it was.

(B) When we have ascertained, so far as is possible, the actual development of the worship, as seen in the history and in the prophets, we shall then turn to the Pentateuch and, taking up in turn the three documentary strata therein, we shall seek to ascertain the religious ideas as to the acceptable worship of God, which are mirrored in the narratives and laws which each contains.

(C) Finally we shall compare the results of (A) and (B). If we find that, by placing the Pentateuchal documents in a certain order (viz. JE, D, P), the same process of development is to be seen in the Law as in the History, it will, to my mind at least, be impossible to avoid the conclusion that this order represents the true historical order, and that will mean that Israel arrived at its full development in the sphere of worship, not at the beginning, but at the end of its history, so far as it is related in the Old Testament.

A. The Historical and Prophetic Books.

What evidence do these afford as to the religious ideas and customs which prevailed during the three successive periods into which the history of Israelite worship may be divided? We shall group our discoveries under the four heads: Altars, Sanctuaries, Sacrifices, and Ministrants.

I. From the Judges to King Josiah.

1. *Altars*.—In Judges we find Gideon building an altar at Ophrah (6²⁴), and 'the people' doing the same at Bethel (21⁴). Samuel builds an altar at Ramah (1 S 7¹⁷), Saul after Michmash (14³⁵), and David at Araunah's threshing-floor (2 S 24²⁵). Solomon sacrificed upon a great altar at Gibeon (1 K 3⁴). When the ten tribes broke away from the sway of the Davidic dynasty, Jeroboam promptly built an altar at Bethel (12³²). Elijah lamented that Israel, under the instigation of Ahab and Jezebel, had broken down *Jehovah's* altars, and he himself rebuilds one on Mount Carmel (18³⁰ 19^{10, 14}). Isaiah foretold (19¹⁹) that there would be an altar to Jehovah in Egypt, and a pillar

to Jehovah on its border. We can safely infer the existence of other altars, though they are not specifically mentioned, wherever we read that sacrifices were offered. When Elisha was called to follow Elijah, he slew (or 'sacrificed') the yoke of oxen with which he had been plowing, and boiled their flesh, and gave unto the people, and they did eat (1 K 19²¹). We may be sure that, as the Hebrew word implies, he fulfilled the regular custom, and not only poured out the blood, but offered the fat sacrificially upon an impromptu altar. This would seem to be what Saul did after the battle of Michmash, when he had a great stone rolled to him, and insisted that the people should bring their sheep and oxen and slay them there, and pour out the blood to Jehovah. 'And,' says the narrator or editor, 'Saul built an altar unto Jehovah; the same was the first altar that he built unto Jehovah.' Evidently in the opinion of this writer, he afterwards built other altars of which we have no record. Already in the preceding chapter (1 S 13^{9ff.}) we find Saul sacrificing at Gilgal, and in the succeeding chapter (15²¹) he tells Samuel that the people spared sheep and oxen of the Amalekites to sacrifice unto Jehovah at the same spot. The men of Bethshemesh in like manner (1 S 6¹⁴) offered sacrifice 'where there was a great stone'; Adonijah (1 K 1⁹) sacrificed sheep and oxen and fatlings by the stone of Zohelath; and David (2 S 6^{13, 17}), when bringing up the ark into the city of David, as soon as they had gone six paces, sacrificed an ox and a fatling, and, when he had set the ark in the tent at Jerusalem, again offered sacrifices before Jehovah. These sacrifices all imply altars.

2. *Sanctuaries*.—Not only were there many altars during this period, but there were a number of sanctuaries. Not that every altar meant a sanctuary. Many were impromptu altars, built for an emergency and not used again—altars of earth or unhewn stone—but in addition to these there were a number of 'places' at which the worship of Jehovah was regularly carried on, and where more or less permanent buildings were erected. Such were Shiloh and Nob and Gibeon and Bethel and Dan and Beersheba, and the word 'sanctuary' is best reserved for these main centres of worship. The altars would be in the open air outside the building, so that the smoke might go up to heaven; but within the house, if we may judge from what we are told took place at Shiloh and Nob, shewbread was placed before Jehovah, a lamp burned all day, the ark or the ephod was kept, and the priest or priests lived and guarded the shrine and its contents.

The word translated 'sanctuary' (*mikdash*) is only used five times in the historical and prophetic literature of this long period. Once it is used mystically of Jehovah (Is 8¹⁴), and four times as equivalent to 'high place' [Jos 24²⁶ (Shechem), Am 7¹³ (Bethel), Is 16¹² (Moabite high place), and Am 7⁹ (high places throughout the land of Israel); cf. in the Holiness Code Lv 26³¹ (30)]. But while the word in this period is rarely found, the thing itself is not rare. Am 7⁹ and Lv 26³¹ (note the plurals and the parallelism in both passages) show that the sanctuaries at which Israel offered sacrifices to Jehovah were the high places of which we read so often in the historical books. In 1 S 9¹⁰⁻²⁵ we read that Saul and his servant went up with Samuel to the 'high place' above the city of Ramah. 'The people had a sacrifice there' and the usual feast followed. In 10³⁻⁸ we read of men 'going up to God to Bethel,' and of prophets 'coming down from the high place' 'at the hill of God.' The compiler of 1 and 2 Kings records with disapproval that under even the best of the kings the people worshipped in the high places, but it seems quite clear that these kings had no notion that thereby they were doing wrong. Amos and Hosea denounce the worship at high places, not because the latter were illegitimate 'places' *per se*, but because the worshippers attached false value to the mere ritual. Jehovah desires 'not sacrifice, but mercy' (Hos 6⁶). Isaiah denounces the Judean sacrifices for the same reason in spite of the fact that they were offered in the Temple at Zion.

3. *Sacrifices*.—The sacrifices which were offered in this period consisted mainly of 'burnt-offerings' and 'peace-offerings.' The latter were often called simply 'sacrifices.' Gideon (Jg 6²⁰) offered a bullock as a burnt-offering on his altar at Ophrah; at Bethel (21⁴) the people offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; Solomon (1 K 3^{3, 4}) did the same at Gibeon, and later (8^{63, 64}) in the Temple at Jerusalem. Jeroboam offered peace-offerings (12^{32, 33}), and Elijah a burnt-offering (18³⁸). A third word (*minḥah*, lit. 'gift' or 'oblation') is occasionally used. *Minḥah* came to mean 'meal-' or 'grain-offering' (2 K 16¹³⁻¹⁵), but in the earlier days it meant an offering of any kind [it is, e.g., used (Gn 4³⁻⁵) both of Cain's and Abel's offerings], and this is the meaning which obtains in most of the comparatively rare uses of the word in the historical and pre-exilic prophetic books [cf. its frequent secular use as 'present' (Gn 32¹³⁻³³ 43¹¹⁻²⁰ etc.), and see, e.g., 1 S 2¹⁷. 1 K 8⁶⁴ shows clear indications of editorial work].

4. *Ministrants*.—In Jg 17-18 a man of Ephraim,

Micah by name, had 'a house of God,' in which he placed a graven image (another account says 'an ephod and teraphim') and 'consecrated' one of his sons to be 'his priest.' When, however, a Levite of the family of Judah (according to 18²⁰ R.V., the grandson of Moses) passed that way, Micah 'consecrated' the Levite, and the latter became his priest. 'Then said Micah, Now know I that Jehovah will do me good, seeing I have a Levite as my priest.' This Levite priest and his sons (according to 18³⁰) eventually became the priests of the Danites at their sanctuary 'until the day of the captivity of the land.' [See also Jg 19-21.]

Two surprising facts stand out. (i) Micah, a layman of Ephraim, considers himself quite competent, not only to 'consecrate' (the same phrase as is used in Ex 28⁴¹ 29⁹, etc., of Moses' consecration of Aaron and his sons; see RVm in both passages) his own son to be priest, but even to consecrate a Levite to be priest. (ii) He is sure that to have a Levite for his priest in his private shrine will be acceptable to Jehovah. This conviction that any one may be made priest at a sanctuary, and by laymen, reappears from time to time in the history. When the ark was brought into the house of Abinadab in 'the hill,' the men of Kirjath-jearim sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of Jehovah (1 S 7¹). Samuel himself was the son of an Ephraimite, but he ministered to (before) Jehovah, clad with a linen ephod such as priests wore, and slept 'in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was' (1 S 2^{11, 18} 3^{1, 3}). At a later time he 'built an altar unto Jehovah' at Ramah, where his house was (1 S 7¹⁷), at which we may be sure he sacrificed. By Samuel's express invitation all the people go to Gilgal and 'there make Saul king before Jehovah, and there sacrifice peace-offerings before Jehovah' (1 S 11^{14, 15}). To the same place he comes to sacrifice before Saul's campaign begins, though Saul anticipates him by reason of his delay (13⁸⁻¹²), and in chap. 16 we see him come to Bethlehem to sacrifice to Jehovah, and invites Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice (cf. 20²⁹). David himself offered sacrifices before Jehovah, and blessed the people in the name of Jehovah of hosts (2 S 6^{17, 18}). According to 2 S 8¹⁸ his sons were priests, and according to 20²⁶ and 1 K 4⁵ Ira the Jairite and Zabud the son of Nathan were priests 'unto David' and to Solomon respectively. These are enumerated separately from Zadok and Abiathar. Were the latter the priests for public occasions and in charge of the ark, and the former the men of David's staff, who

among other duties acted as private court-chaplains? Solomon (1 K 8) at the dedication of the Temple himself offered the great prayer, blessed all the congregation, hallowed the altar-court, and offered sacrifice (see also 9²⁵). Later kings, such as Jeroboam in the northern kingdom (12^{32, 39}) and Ahaz in the southern (2 K 16^{12, 13}), personally offered sacrifices upon their temple-altars. And not only kings offered sacrifice. At the more impromptu altars, and perhaps at most high places, it would seem that the lay-offerer was himself the sacrificer [note the quotation from Curtiss in Article 4], as witness Gideon and many another.

Apart from the stories of two individual Levites in Jg 17-20, there are in Judges, Samuel, and Kings only three references to 'the Levites' (note the plural), and all three (1 S 6¹⁵, 2 S 15²⁴, 1 K 8⁴) bear clear marks of being editorial additions (as may be seen in any modern commentary). There is a long section of nearly ten chapters in Joshua (13¹⁵⁻²²) which refers twelve times to 'the Levites' as though they were a distinct order from the priests, but the many indisputable examples of a priestly writer's phraseology in these chapters clearly show that they are post-exilic. The earlier prophets—Amos, Hosea, Micah, and the Isaiah of history—make not one single reference to the Levites. On the other hand, both these prophets and the writers of Samuel and Kings make frequent reference to priests (ninety-five times of priests at Shiloh, Nob, or Jerusalem, and thirty-five times of priests of high places). We shall see in Article 4 what were the specific duties of the priests, as distinguished from the layman, in the earlier days.

To sum up, we find in this first period (1) many altars, (2) numerous sanctuaries, (3) sacrifices (burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, and occasionally gifts (*minḥah*)), and (4) laymen, as well as priests, freely ministering at the altars.

II. We come now to the period which centres in King Josiah's reformation.

When Samaria fell, and Israel went into captivity, Judah alone remained, and the field was left clear

for Jerusalem and its Temple. Isaiah pointed the moral. Jehovah had shown His predilection for Zion, and Isaiah's contemporaries naturally understood His words about the city as glorifying the Temple. Jeremiah's words in 7⁴⁻¹⁴ about the slogan 'The temple of Jehovah' seem to show this (cf. Mic 1⁵). Yet other sanctuaries still subsisted alongside the royal sanctuary. Hezekiah apparently tried to abolish them (2 K 18^{4, 22}), but with no permanent result, for a terrible reaction followed; and when Josiah came to the throne in 639 B.C. the high places were in full use, and the type of worship even in the Temple at Jerusalem was so low that immoralities seem to have been the customary concomitants of the ritual (2 K 23⁷). Jeremiah's early prophecies confirm this (2²⁸, as many gods as cities; 2²⁷ 3⁹, stocks and stones; 2²⁰ 3^{6, 13}, upon every high mountain and under every green tree). Looked at from the viewpoint of a later age the Baalim of Jer 2²⁸, Hos 2¹³, etc., seem to be purely heathenish, but, judging by Hos 2^{16, 17}, it is much more probable that the local images or Baals were popularly identified with Jehovah.

But in the eighteenth year of Josiah a great change came (2 K 22-23). 'A book of the law' is discovered. Kings, priests, and prophets under its influence make common cause. A radical reformation is set on foot (2 K 23¹⁻¹⁵; the extension to the cities of Samaria, and indeed vv. 16-20 may be due to a later hand). The keynote of this reformation was *centralization*—one altar at one central sanctuary served by Jerusalem priests only. The bulk at least of the priests of the high places had to content themselves with admission to a subordinate share in the services at the Temple (2 K 23⁹). (See period III. sect. 4.)

It would seem as though the effect of the reformation was short-lived. Ezekiel (6³⁻⁶) speaks of high places and altars, sun-images and idols, upon the mountains of Israel, and (8) describes the idolatrous practices in the Temple itself. But, as we shall see in dealing with the next period, the ideal of a central sanctuary was not lost.

Literature.

LOCALIZING THE DIVINE.

A book of extraordinary interest and value from every point of view has been written by the Rev. A. C. Bouquet, D.D., *The Real Presence; or, The*

Localization in Cultus of the Divine Presence (Cambridge University Press; 4s. net). Why do men localize the Deity? Is it wrong? Is iconoclasm or idolatry the right attitude? Or is one as good as the other? Should the cultus of a localized