

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Altars and Sanctuaries in the Old Testament.

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

II.

A. The Historical and Prophetical Books (contd.).

III. THE third historical period is the Exile and after, as seen in Ezekiel, the post-exilic prophets, Ezra and Nehemiah, together with the sidelight cast by Chronicles.

1. *Sanctuaries*.—The Exile completed the work of reformation. The complete break with the past made it possible for a new generation to abandon the high places for ever, and to return, a religious rather than a political body, centring round Jerusalem. To them the one God could only have one place of worship. The second Temple stood without a rival. The word 'sanctuary' (*miḡdash*) now comes to be used exclusively of the Temple (see Art. I. p. 13).

[It is used twenty-four times of the second Temple, twenty-three times of the first, and five times (where the exact reference is not quite clear) in the Psalms; twenty-nine uses are in Ezekiel, two in late prophecies in Jeremiah, two in Isaiah, eight in Chronicles and Nehemiah, three in Lamentations, three in Daniel, five in the Psalms. In Ezk 21² (7 in Heb. text) the parallelism with Jerusalem indicates that 'sanctuaries' means the sacred buildings which covered the Temple area.]

Any idea of a sanctuary other than that at Jerusalem seems to have vanished from the mind of Ezekiel and his successors.

2. *Altars*.—In the second Temple there were eventually two altars (1 Mac 1²¹ 4⁴⁷⁻⁵⁰)—the altar of burnt-offering and the altar of incense. But Ezekiel speaks only of 'the altar' (of brass) in the Temple court and of an altar or table within the Temple, *i.e.* the shewbread table.

[In chap. 6⁸ 'altars' are altars of the high places. In 8⁶, 16⁹, dealing with the first Temple, he speaks simply of 'the altar'—once 'the altar of brass.' In the vision of the future Temple (40⁴⁶–47¹) he speaks ten times of 'the altar' which would stand in the Temple court, and once he calls the shewbread table 'the altar,' says that it was of wood, and explains: 'This is the table that is before Jehovah' (cf. Mal 1⁷).] Even in Ezr 3^{2,3} and Neh 10³⁴ the altar in the court is still called simply 'the altar.' But when we come to Chronicles (the last book in the Hebrew Bible), while in some

passages we find the earlier usage, in others we find the altar in the court called 'the altar of burnt-offering,' and a second altar appears, called 'the altar of incense' (1 Ch 28¹⁶, 2 Ch 4¹⁹ 26^{16, 19}). These two altars are said (1 Ch 6⁴⁹ (34 in Heb. text)) to have existed in the tabernacle, and the duty of officiating at both was reserved to 'Aaron and his sons.'

[A 'golden altar' is mentioned in the present text of 1 K 6²⁰⁻²² and 7⁴⁸, but the altar of cedar overlaid with gold in 6²⁰ is clearly the shewbread table, as in Ezekiel and Malachi, while the other two verses bear all the marks of interpolation from the parallel account in Chronicles.] If there were two altars in Solomon's Temple from the first, the silence of the earlier historical books and of Ezekiel seems inexplicable. Even 2 Ch 29¹⁸, following perhaps an earlier source, speaks only of 'the altar of burnt-offering' and 'the table of shewbread.'

3. *Sacrifices*.—Ezekiel has been called 'the priest in the prophet's mantle.' In his picture of the future (40–48) the Temple and its ritual hold central place. The first Temple was in ruins, its worship had ceased. If the tradition was not to be lost, past practice must be written down, with such modifications as would secure greater reverence in the future. In Ezekiel and in Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, we find a great development of animal sacrifice. The ancient practice, as we have seen (A, I. 3), knew only two regular kinds. Probably at that time only thank-offerings were offered in ordinary life, burnt-offerings being the outcome of some special emergency or in connexion with great public occasions. But from the time that slaughter of domestic animals for food becomes divorced from sacrifice (see Dt 12¹³⁻²⁷ and Art. 6) the altar becomes pre-eminently 'the altar of burnt-offering.' Thank-offerings pass into the background, and offerings wholly given to God take the leading place (see *e.g.* Ezr 3²⁻⁶). The *minḡah* ('gift' or 'oblation,' A, I. 3) comes more and more to have the specific meaning of grain-offering (Ezk 42¹³ and fourteen times, etc.). Ezekiel also uses a new name for a sacrificial gift to God, namely, 'Korban' (20²⁸ 40⁴³ R.V. 'offering' and 'oblation'), which is familiar to us from its use in the Gospel according to St. Mark (7¹¹). Moreover, new varieties of

offerings appear first in Ezekiel, and recur in Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah. These are the sin- and guilt- (trespass) offerings. They probably came into use in the century previous to the Exile, as Ezekiel assumes that their nature is known.

Further, during this last period there comes in the offering of incense. The older historical and prophetic literature makes no reference to the offering of incense. The earliest passage is Jer 6²⁰, which declares frankincense (קִטְוֶה) and sweet cane to be unacceptable to Jehovah.

[There are other eleven uses of *l'bōnah*, all in the later literature (see B, III. 3 below). The word usually translated incense (קִטְוֶה) occurs fifteen times outside the Pentateuch. It means literally 'sweet smoke.' In Pr 27⁹ it is used of perfume (cf. Ca 3⁹ 'perfumed'). In three passages certainly—probably in five—it is the smoke arising from sacrificial burning on the altar. So Ps 66¹⁵ (the *ḥfōreth* of rams is parallel to burnt-offerings of fatlings), Is 1¹³ (note parallel and context), and Ps 141² (parallel to evening oblation); probably also 2 Ch 29⁷ (note parallel and the silence of vv. 18, 31-35 as to any altar of incense or any burning of incense in the cleansed Temple), and even the late passage, 1 S 2²⁸ (note context and parallel). In Ezekiel (8¹¹ 16¹⁸ 23⁴¹) we come upon the first clear instances of *ḥfōreth* as meaning incense of spices, and Chronicles provides us with six more (1 Ch 6⁴⁹ 28¹⁸, 2 Ch 2⁴ 13¹¹ 26¹⁶, 19). The use of the cognate verb 'to cause to smoke' is on the same lines. Unfortunately the R.V., following the A.V., has regularly translated it, when used absolutely, 'burn incense.' And yet a careful study of the sixty uses of the verb absolutely, and of the twelve

cases in which an object is expressed, leads to the conviction that fifty-four of the former and nine or ten of the latter refer to 'sacrificial smoke' and not to 'incense proper.' Chronicles alone gives clear uses of the verb in the latter sense (1 Ch 6⁴⁹, 2 Ch 2⁴, 8 13¹¹ 26¹⁶, 18, 19).]

4. Lastly, in this third period we find significant change in the ministry at the altar. In Ezekiel 40-48, for the first time in the authentic history of Israel, we come upon two Orders of ministrants. 'The sons of Levi' (40⁴⁶) are henceforth to be divided into two bodies (44⁶⁻¹⁶): (i) the Levitical priests of Jerusalem (vv. 16, 16), who claimed descent from Zadok, are alone to be priests in the future Temple; (ii) the former priests of the country sanctuaries (vv. 10-14) are to be degraded, because of their idolatrous practices. Under the distinctive name of Levites they are henceforth to perform those inferior duties in the Temple which had in the past been performed by uncircumcised aliens (vv. 6-9). This was probably only stereotyping what had already begun to be customary after Josiah's reformation. And when we turn to Ezra and Nehemiah we find the two Orders actually ministering in the second Temple on the lines laid down by Ezekiel. Moreover, when the same writer retells the story of the past in Chronicles, he pictures the ministry of the first Temple as organized on similar lines. In these three books, which were originally one, 'the Levites' are mentioned one hundred and sixty-one times and the priests one hundred and seventy-five times. This is clearly regarded as the normal and only legal state of things. The result of the above historical survey may be summarized in a table :

<i>Period.</i>	<i>Altars.</i>	<i>Sanctuaries.</i>	<i>Sacrifices.</i>	<i>Ministrants.</i>
I.	Many	Numerous	Two main types	Laymen and priest (no sharp division).
II.	One	One	Two main types	Levite priests.
III.	One	One	Five types	{ Priests (Zadokite). { Levites (inferior Order).

B. The Pentateuch.

We now turn to the Pentateuch and study the statements with regard to worship set forth in narrative and legislation in the three main literary strata which have been found to exist side by side

within it. There are marked differences between the three in outlook and in law, and each one of the three corresponds in these respects with one of the three historical periods.

I. The extant remains of the document known as JE.—This is a composite document formed by com-

binning two earlier documents, one Judaic and one Ephraimite. The book of the Covenant lays down (Ex 20²⁴⁻²⁶) that, when an Israelite wants to sacrifice, he shall make unto Jehovah an altar of earth and shall sacrifice thereon his burnt-offerings and his peace-offerings, his sheep and his oxen. If the altar is made of stone, it shall be of unhewn stone; to lift up a tool upon it is to pollute it. In any case it must not be approached by steps for seemliness' sake. The accompanying promise, 'In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come unto thee and will bless thee,' points to a multiplicity of altars. No restriction is made as to who shall minister at the altar. The offerer is apparently himself to be the ministrant, in accordance, no doubt, with ancient custom.

[On 'the house of Jehovah' (Ex 23¹⁹, etc.) see Article 4.]

As with the Law in JE, so with the narrative. In Genesis the patriarchs erect altars wherever they settle, and offer their own sacrifices, and these places are the very places which in the history are noted as famous holy places. 'As a rule, a Divine appearance calls attention to, or afterwards confirms, the holiness of the place' (see Art. 5, III. 1, iv). Thus the highest sanction is given to the worship which obtained at these holy places in the first centuries of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. All that seemed offensive at a later period, when Jerusalem was regarded as the only legitimate centre for worship, is in JE consecrated and countenanced by Jehovah Himself and by the acts of Jehovah's favoured friends, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—high places, local altars and sacrifices, memorial pillars, sacred trees and wells. The correspondence between all this and the features of the worship of the Israelites in both kingdoms before King Josiah's centralization is too obvious to need elaboration.

II. DEUTERONOMY.¹—It is impossible to avoid seeing the correspondence between this book and the record of the reformation of Josiah. Almost every feature which appears in 2 K 23 can be paralleled in Deuteronomy. Here, especially in chap. 12, we find insistence upon unity of worship at one centre. It is important to remember that the standpoint (whether real or assumed) is that of Moses in Moab before the entrance into Canaan, and the language is therefore normally in accordance with that standpoint. If, therefore, the writer was really writing in the days of (say) Hezekiah or Manasseh, and he wished to urge the destruction of the high places, because of the degeneracy of

¹ For literary criticism, see *Since Wellhausen*, art. 4.

the worship of Jehovah as carried on in them in his own day, he had to speak of them as they would appear by anticipation from Moses' standpoint. Moses would naturally have thought of them as the sites of worship of the Canaanite Baals. Keeping this in mind and turning to Dt 12²⁻⁷, we realize the significance of the command—(i) to destroy all the sacred 'places' of the Canaanites 'upon the high mountains and upon the hills and under every green tree' (= Jer 2²⁰ 3^{6, 13}), to break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their sacred poles and hew down their carved images, and then (ii) to resort to 'the place which Jehovah your God shall choose out of all your tribes,' and thither to bring all their sacrifices and offerings and there to eat with joy before Jehovah. The word 'high place' is not used in Deuteronomy; the writer uses instead the word 'place.' An elaborate list of offerings is given in 12⁶, but nothing is said about sin- or guilt-offerings. The thought of joyousness is still prominent.

[The word 'altar' is rare in Deuteronomy. It is used twice (7⁵ 12³) of altars which are to be thrown down, three times (27⁶⁻⁷) of the altar of unhewn stone on Mount Ebal, three times (12²⁷ and 26⁴) of the altar of Jehovah at the place of His choice, and once (16^{21, 22}) in a prohibition of pillar or pole before the altar of Jehovah, which seems to belong to an earlier date than chap. 12⁴.]

As to ministry, there is only one Order, 'the Levite priests' (17^{9, 18}, etc.); gulf between Levites and priests there is none (Dt 10⁸, etc.).²

Dt 18⁶⁻⁸ looks as if it was intended to provide that country priests, when their local high places were thrown down, should be admitted to serve as priests at the Temple in Jerusalem. If so, it failed in its purpose (see 2 K 23⁹).

Deuteronomy thus bears manifest marks of being later than JE, and to present those ideas which came into force in the days of Josiah.

III. THE PRIESTLY CODE.³—In this code we find: 1. a central sanctuary, the Tabernacle (lit. the dwelling), where alone legitimate sacrifice can be offered. It is framed on the same lines as the two Temples, with outer court, Holy Place, and Holy of holies.

[*Mishkân* is used of God's 'dwelling' outside the Pentateuch in a non-technical sense, once in the first period in 2 S 7⁶, cf. 1 Ch 17⁵ (Jos 22^{19, 20} are

² For complete list of phrases used, see *Since Wellhausen*, p. 123 note.

³ For the literary analysis of this, see *Since Wellhausen*, art. 5, pp. 118 ff.

in a post-exilic passage), once in Ezk 37²⁷ (cf. v. 26) and seven times in the Psalms (once of Shiloh and six times of the Temple, five of these in the plural); eight times it is used in the technical sense of 'the Tabernacle' (six being in Chronicles and two in Joshua). In the Pentateuch it is not once used in JE or D, though Deuteronomy uses the cognate verb ('dwell') in 12¹¹, etc. But in P it is used of the Tabernacle ninety-nine times.]

This 'dwelling' is twelve times in P called 'the sanctuary,' just as in Ezekiel and later writings the Temples are so called (see A, III. 1).

2. This sanctuary contains in the court an altar of burnt-offering, and (in a late supplement, Ex 30¹⁻⁷. Note 29⁴³⁻⁴⁶, bringing the account of the Tabernacle to a conclusion, 27¹ 'the altar,' etc., and the 'censers' in Lv 10 and Nu 16, cf. Ezk 8¹¹) an altar of incense before the veil (see A, III. 2).

3. Upon the altar of burnt-offering are 'made to smoke' (R.V. 'burn,' twenty-seven times, Ex 29¹³, etc.) the burnt-offerings and 'the fat' of the other sacrifices. The sin-offering (ninety-eight times) and the guilt-offering (twenty-eight times) and the Day of Atonement now appear in the Law and are given prominence. The word *korban*, used as in Ezekiel, is found in the Hebrew seventy-five times. It is generally translated 'oblation' in R.V. as Lv 1²⁻³, etc. The *minḥah* is now exclusively the 'meal-offering' (Lv 2, 3, etc), and is accompanied by frankincense (*l'bonah*, Lv 2¹ and ten times). To burn incense morning and evening is the exclusive privilege of Aaron (Ex 30⁷⁻⁸) and his descendants, and on the Day of Atonement it is given a very conspicuous place in the ritual, and is offered by the high priest himself (Lv 16¹²⁻¹³) in a censer (see A, III. 3).

4. Finally, the ministrants within and without the Tabernacle are sharply divided. Aaron and his sons are consecrated to be priests, performing all the service within the Tabernacle and blessing the people (Ex 28-29). The tribe of Levi are then given to Aaron (Nu 3⁶⁻⁴, 2⁴⁷⁻⁵³). They carry the Tabernacle and its holy contents when on journeys, and camp around it when at rest. When going on journeys the holy things must be covered up by the priests before the Levites enter to carry them out. Instead of having no portion or inheritance, they are given the tithe and forty-eight cities (and in Jos 21 a priestly writer records the fulfilment of this command). Ezekiel sketched out a different provision (45¹⁻⁵ 48⁸⁻¹⁴) (see A, III. 4).

Here, in P, we have a remarkable correspondence with the phraseology, ritual, and practice of the

repatriated community in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

C. Conclusion.

Looking back now over the whole range of our study, we cannot fail to be struck by the correspondence between JE, D, and P, when placed in that order, on the one hand, and the actual development of worship, as we have traced it, in history and prophecy on the other. As long as we retain the conception of the Pentateuchal Law as given in its present order, and completed before the entrance into Canaan, so long we are faced by three extremely puzzling facts:

i. The fact that there are immense differences of outlook and of legislative requirements in JE, D, and P themselves.

ii. The fact that D is blankly ignorant of the Tabernacle and of its most significant ritual and ministry, which *ex hypothesi* had been solemnly promulgated as ordinances for ever by Moses himself only a few years before.

iii. The fact that, according to this arrangement, at the beginning and at the end of the Biblical history of Israel, two sharply contrasted Orders of Priests and Levites are represented as ministering in the sanctuary, while during the intervening period, lasting many centuries, this ordering, introduced under the most solemn sanctions, is ignored by everybody.

The puzzle disappears as soon as we accept the solution, which Wellhausen presented with such convincing force:

- (i) that JE is the earliest of the three strata;
- (ii) that D is the result of the prophetic teaching of Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, and answers, in part at least, to 'the book of the Covenant' of Josiah; and
- (iii) that P's picture of the Mosaic theocracy is a reflection back into the distant past of the threefold ministry as it existed in the writer's own day (say 500 B.C.).

This 'relieves the religious leaders of the nation in the past from the charge of wilful neglect of the Mosaic Ordinances, and presents P, not as the foundation, but as the headstone, of the Pentateuch.'¹

It may seem at first sight a loss that the high ideals of the Tabernacle should not be traceable back to the time of Moses, but (i) if the later date be the true one, it is the date which in the counsel of God was the most suitable and therefore the best.

¹ See *Since Wellhausen*, p. 127.

(ii) It is in accordance with God's order both in nature and grace that the more simple should come first and the more elaborate at a later stage.

(iii) Whatever be the date, the Tabernacle and the worship of the second Temple set forth the same lesson of the holiness of God and the reverence with which men should draw near to worship Him. The Day of Atonement still foreshadows the way by which the Divine High Priest was one day to 'enter in once for all

into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption.'

If it is because they believe that such spiritual teachings as these are done away with by the 'Wellhausen theory,' that so many devout Christians still cling desperately to the traditional view, then may not one hope that a truer understanding of the position will lead them to recognize that it is only historical questions of date and authorship which are in question, and that the truths they cherish are not in danger?

Literature.

A THEOLOGY FOR LAYMEN.

WELCOME signs are appearing on every hand of a revival of interest in Christian doctrine. The bold assertion that it does not matter what a man believes so long as he lives right, is less frequently heard. It is beginning to be seen—though it was always plain enough to those who had eyes to see—that belief and conduct are not to be separated. The attempt to carry on with a creedless Christianity is manifestly a failure, and many who had drifted away from a positive creed are again seeking for some sure anchorage of faith.

In these circumstances we note with the greatest pleasure the appearance of an extremely able and timely book, *Beliefs that Matter*, by the Rev. W. Adams Brown, Ph.D., D.D. (Hodder & Stoughton; 8s. 6d. net). Dr. Adams Brown made a name for himself in the theological world years ago by his 'Christian Theology in Outline,' and it is not too much to say that the present volume will enhance his reputation. He has been a close and penetrating observer of the trend of thought in our day. 'The generation that is drawing to a close has been trying on an unprecedented scale the experiment of a creedless religion.' Now there are signs that the tide is on the turn. 'In many quarters we find evidences of a reviving interest in questions of belief. In the church this appears in movements like Fundamentalism and Anglo-Catholicism, which emphasize the importance of right thinking in religion. Outside the Church it appears in the increased market for books which deal with the more serious aspects of religion. Theology, it appears, is coming to its own again.' To meet this situation Dr. Adams Brown has written his book.

It is 'neither a history of belief nor an apology for believing. It is a statement as plain as I can make it of what one modern Christian believes may be a practicable faith for the men and women of to-day.'

It would be quite impossible to give an adequate idea of the richness and variety of its contents, for it travels over the whole field of belief. After an introductory chapter on Why Religion cannot Dispense with Belief, there follow chapters on What to Believe about Oneself, about the World we live in, about Jesus, about the Cross, about God, about the Church, about the Bible, about the Sacrament, and about Immortality. These are immense topics to be treated in a volume of three hundred pages, yet they are handled in a masterly way without leaving any sense of omissions or undue compression. The sub-title of the book is 'A Theology for Laymen,' and nothing could be more admirable as a guide to any intelligent inquirer. Preachers will find in it inspiration for many sermons, and if they could embody its leading ideas in a course of lectures, systematic theology might begin to shine out again after its long eclipse. At the end of the book there is a carefully selected bibliography and an excellent index.

THE ETHIC OF JESUS.

Books on 'Christian Ethics' have not, in general, been impressive performances. A blight seems to fall on any one who begins to expound this theme—why, it is difficult to say. Even Martensen is not beyond a suspicion of dullness. A straight book on ethics can be very fascinating; witness Professor Laird's 'Study in Moral Theory.' On the