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Prove all things; hold fast that which is good

The Bible Student and Teacher

Continuing "The Bible Student" formerly published in Columbia, S. C.—Old Series, Volume IX, No. 8.

Issued by the Education Committee of The American Bible League:

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Entered as Second-Class Matter, January 30, 1904, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

Subscription \$1.00 a year in advance (Foreign \$2.00 in advance.) 15 Cents a Copy

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Continuing The Bible Student

Volume I. New Series. AUGUST, 1904

Number 8

Editorial Notes

We are just now witnessing a somewhat violent recrudescence of what in **New Outbreak** reality has been, under varying forms, an age-long **of an Old** controversy. We refer to **Controversy.** the renewal of the debate over the seat of authority in religion. According to the Biblical narrative this debate opened in Eden, and ushered in the Fall. Certain it is that we catch sounds of it coming down from a very remote past. Never perhaps has it attracted wider attention or reached a more acute stage than since the year 1902. In that year appeared, on this side of the water, Dr. Coe's **The Religion of a Mature Mind**, and from across the water, Prof. Auguste Sabatier's **The Outline of a Philosophy of Religion**. The next year witnessed the publication of **Liberal Christianity**, by Prof. Jean Réville, a pupil and later a colleague of Professor Sabatier, and also that of **Principles and Ideals for the Sunday-School**, by Drs. Burton and Matthews of the University of Chicago. And within the current year there has come from the press **Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit**, the latest volume of Prof. Sabatier, now deceased. The writers of these several volumes are, one and all, serious and able men.¹

More important to be noted even than the ability and seriousness of these crit-

ics is the fact that they are as it were but voices giving expression to the religious unrest and ferment of the time. The views they express are only too likely to increase that ferment, or, and this would be even more disastrous, to lead men to settle down in perilous contentment with false notions upon this vital question.

We have said that these writers one and all are able and serious men. And **Some Things** so they are. Not only so, but they all write in the **to be** interest of what they be- **Thankful For.** lieve to be truth. Let us discriminate, however. The fact that they mean well ought not to be overlooked. But neither ought it to hide from our eyes the equally certain fact that the consequences of their activity bode not good but harm. Paul thought that he did God service when he made havoc of the Church. But he made havoc of the Church. So, as the result of the views championed by these writers, many will go backward, and stumble, and fall, and be snared, and taken and broken. And these consequences of their well-meaning we do not feel called upon to view with anything else than pain and indignation. Still we shall neither snort nor fume. We have better use for our energies. We shall rather be thankful, if the controversy that has been thrust upon us results in clarifying our own views of important truth, and so gives

¹We are not disposed to make even Professor Coe an exception to this statement. No doubt the praise of his book by Professor Starbuck (in the *Biblical World*, February, 1904) was overdone and fulsome to a degree. No doubt the blatant immaturities of his *Religion of a Mature Mind*, set forth in his world-in-my-sling style, are apt to repel some thoughtful persons as the mere frothings of a religious demagogue. But after all has

been said, Professor Coe gives unmistakable evidence if not of the most penetrating and discriminating insight still of real mental vigor and grasp, and we believe also of seriousness. We feel sure that in due time he will himself come to see that the question here in issue cannot be settled by any such "center-rush" football tactics as he has unfortunately seen fit to give us an exhibition of in the book already mentioned.

was not alone in the great struggle against idolatry in Israel, for there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. It assured him of the aid of others in the education and discipline of Israel,—Elisha being given him as his assistant and successor, "A bringer of salvation and peace," and Ahaziah and Jehu being named as the instruments of divine punishment and judgment.

This work of preparation as described in the Scriptures covers not only the present Lesson, but also 1 Kings xix. 9-18, the opening Lesson for September. The two Scriptures form a unit, and can be intelligently understood, in their relation to the Prophet's mission, only when taken together. It is also true that both these Scriptures are necessary to an understanding of the part subsequently taken by Elijah in the Syrian war, and in the matter of Naboth.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF ELIJAH

Professor Willis J. Beecher, D.D., Auburn, N. Y.

The most important literary question concerning the Biblical narratives of Elijah and Elisha is that of their presentation of the history of the times. From a political point of view, by far the greatest movement of the time was the persistent effort of Assyria to conquer the region, and the heroic resistance made by Benhadad and Ahab and others. But there is not a syllable concerning this in the books of Kings or Chronicles. The Bible is equally silent concerning that part of the career of Mesha of Moab in which he was victorious and successful. There is no portion of the Biblical narrative which more distinctly illustrates the fact that this narrative is not continuous history, but is rather a series of selected incidents, presented for a religious purpose.

To the casual reader the biographies of Elijah and Elisha give just enough information concerning the history of the time to render them perplexing. Every one has noticed the abruptness with which Elijah is introduced upon the scene. This presupposes a line of preceding events, involving strenuous activities; but what were those events? Both Elijah and Elisha are represented in some incidents as supporters of the kings of the dynasty of Omri, and in other incidents as hostile to those kings; and how is this to be explained?

The person who reads but does not study will never solve these problems. And one will never solve them by studying, no matter how laboriously, if he devotes his studies mainly to ingenious reconstructions of the Biblical accounts, and to far-drawn speculations concerning them. But if one is willing to undertake the relatively simple task of just finding out exactly what the Bible statements mean, especially in the light of the information we have from Assyrian and Moabite sources, his labor will not be fruitless. It is possible to determine in part the events that preceded

the abrupt appearance of Elijah, and to account for the relations that existed between the prophets and the kings of Israel.

The most important points to consider are: first, the duration of the Omri dynasty; second, its marriage alliances; third, its religious policy; fourth, its foreign relations.

1. In dealing with the first of these points we must remember that **Biblical years** are not properly measures of time, but **calendar years**, just as the three days that Jesus lay in the grave were not seventy-two hours, but were Friday and Saturday and Sunday, beginning late on Friday, and ending early on Sunday.

According to the Biblical numbers, Omri reigned twelve years, Ahab twenty-two, Ahaziah two, and Jehoram twelve, making an aggregate of forty-eight years, if we were to count the years as continuously measuring the time. But other statements of the Biblical writer show that this is not the meaning he intended.

Omri smote Zimri the twenty-seventh year of Asa, and reigned twelve years (1 Kings xvi. 15, 23). His twelfth year, therefore, can not have been earlier than the thirty-eighth of Asa. But Ahab came to the throne the thirty-eighth year of Asa (2 Kings xvi. 29). As is usual in this part of the history of northern Israel, that calendar year is counted both as the twelfth year of Omri, and as the first year of Ahab. This double count requires us to diminish by one the apparent forty-eight years of the dynasty.

Further, Jehoshaphat began to reign the fourth year of Ahab (1 Kings xxii. 41). This statement might supposably mean that his first year coincided with the fourth of Ahab; or, it might mean that he became king that year, his first year being counted from the following new year. The latter can be shown to be the true meaning. The calendar year which was Ahab's fifth year was Jehoshaphat's first year. It follows that the twenty-first and twenty-second years of Ahab were the seventeenth and eighteenth years of Jehoshaphat.

But the two years of Ahab's successor Ahaziah were the seventeenth and eighteenth of Jehoshaphat, and the first year of Ahaziah's successor Jehoram was the eighteenth of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xxii. 51; 2 Kings iii. 1). That is to say, these two years are counted both to Ahab and to Ahaziah, and the second of them is also counted as the first year of Jehoram. In other words, Ahaziah began to reign as coregnant with Ahab, and he reigned by himself after Ahab's death only a few months at the most, being succeeded by Jehoram the same year. This further diminishes by three our aggregate of forty-eight years, reducing it to forty-four years. The first year of the forty-four was fractional, being the year in which Zimri overthrew Elah and was himself overthrown by Omri; and the last was also fractional, being the year in which the dynasty of Omri was overthrown by Jehu.

2. Even the most superficial readers have not failed to see that we must count **the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel** (1 Kings xvi. 31) **and the marriage of their daughter Athaliah and Jehoram of Judah**, as events of far-reaching importance. But the full significance of these marriages is more apparent when we observe their time relation to other events. Fortunately, the Biblical data for this are sufficient, though they have been much neglected.

We are told that Jehoshaphat "joined affinity with Ahab" (2 Chron. xviii. 1; cf. 1 Kings xxii. 44). The nature of this affinity is explained when we learn that Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram "had the daughter of Ahab to wife" (2 Kings viii. 18; 2 Chron. xxi. 6); and when it is said of his son Ahaziah that "his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri, king of Israel" (2 Kings viii. 26; 2 Chron. xxii. 2). She was Omri's daughter, of course, in the sense of being his grand-daughter; and her record leaves no one in doubt that her mother was Jezebel.

Her son Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, just at the change from one calendar year to another (2 Chron. xxi. 19), the close of the eleventh and the opening of the twelfth year of Jehoram of Israel (2 Kings ix. 29; viii. 25), the opening of the forty-fourth year of the dynasty of Omri. It follows that Ahaziah was born not later than the twenty-second year of the dynasty, which was the eleventh year of Ahab. Hence we know that his grandmother, Jezebel, married Ahab, not after Ahab became king, but in the early years of Omri. Omri was a man great enough to be able to strengthen his throne by this Tyrian alliance very soon after his accession.

As Ahaziah was born the eleventh year of Ahab, the marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah can hardly have been later than the tenth year of Ahab. And it can not have been much earlier than that, for Jehoram was then but sixteen years of age (2 Kings viii. 16, 17).

3. The dates thus established become very significant when we turn to **the religious problems of the dynasty of Omri**.

Jeroboam had established the worship of Jehovah through the calves of Bethel and Dan as the state religion. Unlike the worship at Jerusalem, this northern cult was in alliance with the high places throughout the country (1 Kings xii. 31). The writer of Kings repeats over and over his condemnation of this cult as "the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he sinned and caused Israel to sin." Amos and Hosea, a few decades later than the dynasty of Omri, condemn Bethel and Dan and the other sanctuaries as profusely as they condemn the immoralities of the people. It is reasonably certain that if we had earlier prophetic sermons we should find in them the same condemnation.

The books of Kings represent that there were in northern Israel **dis-senters from the religion of the calves**, from the time of Jeroboam forward, and the Chronicler asserts the same thing with additional details (1 Kings

xii. 27; xiv. 1-18; xvi. 1, 2, 12; 2 Chron. xi. 13-17; xiii. 9; xv. 9; xvi. 1; 1 Kings xv. 17). Under the dynasty of Omri the dissenters had Elijah and Elisha for leaders, and included the widely spread organizations known as "the sons of the prophets."

The attitude of the dissenters was one of protest against Bethel and Dan and the affiliated high places. Had it been practicable they would have gone up to Jerusalem to worship (see references above). Debarred from this they had their own altars at Carmel and elsewhere (1 Kings xviii. 30-32; xix. 10, 14). The law which requires a single place of national sacrifice (Deut. xii.) expressly exempts private sacrificial feasts (Deut. xii. 15, 21, where the strict rendering is, "thou mayest make a sacrifice and eat flesh," "then thou mayest make a sacrifice of thy herd and of thy flock"). There is no proof that these followers of Elijah did anything at their altars which was contrary to the Deuteronomic law, though they may well have regarded the law as in abeyance, so far as it applied to themselves.

Jezebel found in Israel these two forms of the religion of Jehovah. She introduced a third religion, that of the Tyrian Baal, made it the religion of state, and in its interest tried to exterminate the prophets of Jehovah and their adherents.

It is not probable that she openly entered upon this course immediately after marrying Ahab. And there is no reason to think that the prophetic party at the outset objected to Jezebel. It is likely that she favored them in preference to the state religion. If she intended to supplant Jehovah by Baal, she would naturally foster the differences between the two parties of the adherents of Jehovah, and, to this end, would favor the weaker party. Meanwhile, it is probable that she practiced the religion of Baal, but that her intention to make that religion supreme was kept secret. Her children, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Athaliah, were named for Jehovah. It is supposable that the prophetic party rejoiced in the marriage of Jehoram of Judah and Athaliah. Unless by miraculous revelation they had no means of knowing that Jezebel expected that her brilliant daughter would turn the heir of the throne of Judah from Jehovah to Baal, so that, when the time came, Baal would be supreme in both kingdoms. To most persons it seemed that the marriage might result in a reunited Israel, under a king of the line of David.

In the early part of his reign Ahab's policy was doubtless the same with that of Omri. The same greatness of mind which led Omri to strengthen himself in one direction by the Tyrian alliance, and in another direction by the conquest of Moab, would also lead him to see the desirableness of improved relations with Judah. Throughout the reign of Omri, therefore, and in the reign of Ahab up to the time of the marriage of Athaliah, we may believe that the Omri kings were not on bad terms with the prophetic party.

This situation is presented somewhat strikingly in the story of the Shunamite woman. We are told that seven years or more after the restoration of her son, she received back her land from the king, apparently

Jehoram (2 Kings viii.). It follows that the death and raising of her son belong early in the twelve years of Jehoram's reign, that his birth was some years earlier, in the time of Ahab, and that Elisha's frequent passing by and occupying the chamber on the wall was still earlier. Indeed, these earliest incidents in Elisha's career seem to precede anything that is recorded concerning Elijah. With this in mind, notice Elisha's word to the woman: "What is to be done for thee? Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the host?" (2 Kings iv. 13.) This belongs before the beginning of the persecutions under Jezebel, and the prophet counts his word as likely to be influential with the national administration.

The change in the situation must have come within a very few years after the marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah. Then Jezebel unmasked. The religion of Baal was made the state religion. Presumably the calf-worshipping adherents of Jehovah generally temporized, or went over to the new cult. Not so Elijah and his party. They refused, and wholesale persecutions followed. It is in the midst of this contest that Elijah is abruptly introduced to us (1 Kings xvii.) as presenting an ultimatum from Jehovah to Ahab, and withdrawing from communication with the king. The condition that follows is virtually one of civil war. The slaughter of Baal's prophets at Carmel, the death of Ahaziah's soldiers by fire from heaven, the tearing of the boys that mocked Elisha by the two bears, are battles in this civil war. The effect of these actions was to protect the persecuted adherents of the prophets by showing that there was a power that would avenge them. Elijah and Elisha and their party are loyal to the reigning sovereign, while they are ready to resist, even by force and bloodshed, the king's wrongful advisers and their policy of the wholesale murder of Israelitish citizens.

4. Deferring further consideration of this topic, we turn to **the foreign relations of the dynasty of Omri.**

For this period there ought to be no difference of opinion as to the synchronism between the Biblical and the Assyrian dates. At a time later than the dynasty of Omri, there is either an omission of half a century in the work of the Assyrian chronologists, or overlapping and confusion in the Biblical numbers. If we try to state the matter in years B. C., this affects all the earlier dates; but it has no effect if we make our statement in terms of the regnal years of the Assyrian and Israelitish kings.

Shalmanezar II. says that in his sixth year he defeated Benhadad and Ahab and their allies. This can not have been later than Ahab's twenty-first year; for his twenty-second year was his last, and in that year he and Benhadad were enemies and not allies (1 Kings xxii.). Shalmanezar also says that in his eighteenth year he took tribute from Jehu. This can not have been earlier than the twelfth year of Jehoram, for that was the year when Jehu became king. We have already seen that the first year of Jehoram was the twenty-second year of Ahab. It follows that the twelve

years of Jehoram were the twelve years between the sixth and the eighteenth of Shalmanezzer, and that the synchronism is an exact one.

With this point fixed we are able to trace the course of events. In earlier times Palestine had suffered from the great empires east of the Euphrates, Babylonian or Elamitic or Assyrian, but there had been a long interval of respite. In the time of Omri the peril again became threatening. In Omri's eighth year the armies of Asshur-nazir-pal crossed the Euphrates; and in the following years he operated between the Euphrates and the Phœnician coast, and received the submission of several kings. His successor Shalmanezzer came to the throne in the fifteenth year of Ahab, so that his first year was the sixteenth of Ahab. In that year, and again in the following, he marched his armies to the vicinity of the Mediterranean; and he repeated the process many times during the following twenty-five years. His various records give many details. He speaks of the people of the region as banded together to resist him, Benhadad of Damascus being for many years the leader of the confederacy, and Ahab being one of its most prominent members.

We see at once what the generic process was. When the Assyrian invaders were near, the petty kingdoms became a unit, and the leading king was a dictator. As soon as the pressure of invasion was removed, the kingdoms began fighting one another. In particular the more prominent kings would dispute Benhadad's position as the chief of the confederacy.

About the nineteenth year of Ahab, Shalmanezzer was across the Euphrates, threatening the regions to the west, though it turned out to be only a threat, and not an actual invasion. At this date we find Benhadad attacking Samaria (1 Kings xx.). He has in his army thirty-two kings, and his power over them is such that he can remove the kings from military command, and put captains in their place. He makes demand on Ahab for a surrender that is by its terms utter and complete. Ahab and his counselors meekly accept, but they are ready to fight to the death rather than submit to a slight additional indignity. Their attitude is perfectly explained by the hypothesis that Benhadad's original demand, with its verbiage about gold and silver and wives and children, was a demand that Ahab should accept him as the dictator-chief of the confederacy, placing Israel's military resources at his disposal. This was a reasonable demand if the alternative was subjugation to Assyria. But when a humiliating condition was added, that changed the whole nature of the transaction. Ahab fought, and won a victory. Benhadad, later in the year, strove to recover his prestige, and was again terribly defeated. It was well for the confederates that Shalmanezzer that year confined himself to the vicinity of the Euphrates, for had he attacked them then, he would have found them an easy prey.

We are told that "there continued three years without war between Syria and Israel" (1 Kings xxii. 1), the third year being the twenty-second of Ahab (xxii. 2). So the three years were the twentieth and twenty-first

and the first part of the twenty-second of Ahab. Ahab's victories and the treaty that followed secured peace for the twentieth year. Shalmanezzer says that in the twenty-first year Benhadad and Ahab were in alliance against him, and that he defeated them in a great battle. The following year Shalmanezzer was busy at the sources of the Tigris, and Benhadad and Ahab fought one another (1 Kings xxii.).

In more ways than one the Assyrian and the Biblical accounts here dovetail together. We have already noticed that Ahaziah was made Ahab's colleague on the throne this twenty-first year of Ahab. The fact that the Assyrian situation had now become acute naturally accounts for such an arrangement, and would account for a similar arrangement in Judah, if such an arrangement was made (see 2 Kings i. 17).

The sequel can be better treated in connection with the biography of Elisha. For the present it is sufficient to note that when we understand the history, we see the thorough consistency of the prophets in their attitude toward the house of Omri. They rebuked the kings for their misdeeds. In the matter of Baal they were hostile even to the extent, ultimately, of inciting the bloody revolution under Jehu. Nevertheless they were loyal to the existing government. As against the Assyrian invaders or the Syrian belligerents, they were ready with their wise counsel, their high faith, their inspiring influence. And however ungrateful their sovereigns may have been to them at other times, they turned to them in emergencies; for they could not help knowing that the prophets were men of brains and fidelity and purpose. As long as Jezebel was persecuting the prophets, Elijah was in hostility with Ahab. But when the persecutors had learned the wholesome though severe lesson he taught them at Carmel, and when his country was pressed by foreign enemies, then Elijah was patriotically ready to put his best gifts at the service of the king.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ON "BIBLE LEAGUE PRIMER NO. 1."

For the Study of the Outline of the New Testament.

What was found to be the purpose of the Old Testament?

Can you give a brief outline of the Old Testament?

What is the New Testament?

Why was the Gospel necessary?

What Stages in the revelation of the Gospel are set forth in the New Testament?

What is recorded as accomplished in the First Stage, and in how many Books?

What in the Second Stage, and in how many Books?

What is the purpose of the Four Gospels?

With what Old Testament Books do they correspond?

How many distinct phases in the introduction into the world by Jesus of the Divine Religion as the Gospel?

Is there unity or plan in the Four Gospels?

What is the difference between the first Three Gospels and that of John?

How did Jesus Christ lay the foundation for the Gospel?

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Number 9

Editorial Notes

CHRIST'S "LITTLE ONES."

It is exceedingly touching to observe the tenderness of our Lord's habitual thought of His followers, as manifested in the affectionate designations which

He applies to them. It

Our Lord's was a land and an age in Hypocoristic which the teaching function was greatly magnified.

"No Hindoo fanatic," writes Edersheim, "would more humbly bend before Brahmin saints, nor devout Romanist more venerate the members of a holy community, than the Jew his great Rabbis." And Jesus was the supreme Rabbi, veritably "a teacher come from God" (John iii. 2). First and above everything else, therefore, His followers were His "disciples," and so He constantly thought and spoke of them (Luke xxii. 11; John viii. 31; xiii. 35; xv. 8). As His "disciples" they were, of course, also His "servants" (Matt. x. 24, 25; John xii. 26; xiii. 16); for this is the relation which was universally assumed to be implied in discipleship (Schoettgen, *Hor. Hebr.*, on John xv. 11). But Jesus did not wish to look upon His "disciples" as "servants," though He alone of the Rabbis was really their Lord as well as Master. He preferred to think of them as "friends" (John xv. 15). Nay, they were more even than "friends;" they were His "children" (Mark x. 24; John xxi. 5), or in the extreme expression of His tenderness, His "little children" (John xiii. 33). His shepherd heart went out to them as His "flock" (Matt. xxvi. 31; John x. 16, R. V.), or, rather,

in the fondness of His thought of them, His "little flock" (Luke xii. 32). They were His "sheep" (Matt. x. 6), or even His "little sheep" (John x. 7, 16); or, rather, more lovingly, His "lambs" (Luke x. 3), or even His "little lambs," His "lambkins" (John xxi. 15). It will be observed that the use of what the grammarians call "hypocoristics," or "endearing diminutives," is characteristic of our Lord's thought and speech concerning His followers. In a word, He employs by predilection "pet names" in designating them.

What may be looked upon as, in a formal point of view at least, the typical form of our Lord's "endearing diminutives" as applied to His disciples, may possibly be discerned in a designation that occurs a half-dozen times in the record of the Evangelists, though in all these cases it may have been spoken by the Lord on "These Little Ones." not more than two or three different occasions.

We refer to the designation, "These little ones." There is no substantive expressed. The adjective "little" simply with the article is used substantively,—"the little;" though the demonstrative pronoun is always present, and the phrase is not "the little [ones]," but ever "these little [ones]." The emphasis, that is, is solely upon the objects to whom the designation is applied. These objects are called nothing whatever but "little." This certainly

“Christendom is the argument for Christianity.” And Christendom rests for its existence upon the assertion of Divine and supernatural foundations. The stone which the naturalistic builder rejects is really “the headstone of the corner.” Marvelous in itself, it is marvelous, supernatural in its results and in its manifestations.

And here, as we close, it is to be noted that the necessity and propriety of these different kinds of criticism have their practical inferences. The processes must all be made available and their conclusions taken account of. The Literary Critic must regard those of the Historical Critic; the Textual Critic those of the two preceding; the Naturalistic those of the Supernaturalistic. Each one has its sphere, and any one neglected or ignored may lead to imperfect or erroneous Criticism. Let the truth be sought in all these its varied forms of manifestation. Let it be thus sought in a truthful and truth-loving spirit, and there need be no fear as to the consequence.

THE INTERNATIONAL LESSONS IN THEIR LITERARY AND HISTORICAL SETTING.

The Close of Elijah’s Career, and a Lesson from the Prophet Amos.

The Managing Editor.

For some reason not readily discernible, the International Lessons for September, in their selection of topics, depart widely from both the historic and the literary order marked out by the Scriptures. The career of Elisha which, in its earlier stages, runs parallel with that of Elijah, and who later appears as the immediate successor of Elijah, is relegated to the Lessons for October, and the work of Amos, which belongs to a much later period, is brought back to September. One does not see how this can fail to be confusing to both teacher and learner. Professor Beecher’s luminous paper, “The Biography of Elisha,” will, we trust, serve to bring out and keep in mind the actual relations of the two great miracle-working Prophets. The place of Amos in the movement of the Divine work of redemption will be set forth in the discussion of the Lesson devoted to his message.

The Topics of the Lessons for September are: “Elijah Encouraged,” “Elijah Taken Up Into Heaven,” and “Israel Reproved.” The First and Second Lessons are, of course, drawn from Kings, while the Third is taken from Amos. The Fourth is devoted to a Review of Lessons of the Third Quarter of the year. The Review may be profitably conducted by the teacher himself in the light of the historical and literary discussions in this series of papers on the Setting of the International Lessons. The other Lessons will be taken up in the order laid down.

I. **The First Lesson** has for its Topic “Elijah Encouraged,” and for

its Scripture **1 Kings xix. 9-18**. There is naturally suggested along with it a survey of the narrative concerning the affair of Naboth, the Syrian wars, and the death of Ahab, as found in **1 Kings xx.-xxii**. As already stated, there are no parallel Scriptures, since the Chronicler confines himself to the history (mainly religious) of Judah, and since the events occurred in the period before the production of the Written Prophecies.

This Lesson belongs to the second stage of Elijah's struggle to save Israel from apostasy and judgment. The whole history has been called "the life and death struggle of the true religion with heathenism, under Elijah and Elisha." The first stage, "the whirlwind of reform," embraces **the Prophet's vindication**, by the famine and on Mount Carmel, of **Jehovah as the true and living God**, the God of Israel, against Baal and his adherents, leading to a formal acknowledgment by the people of their covenant with Jehovah. (See August number, p. 481.) The second stage begins with the Prophet's flight to Horeb (treated in the Lessons under "Elijah Discouraged"), whither he went under the guidance of "the angel of Jehovah and where he received his preparation for the more quiet—though not less necessary—educational and suasive work of reform, which he was to carry on until his translation, and then to commit to his successor, Elisha.

The entire scene at Horeb is, then, to be regarded as **the preparation of the Prophet for the changed work that lay before him**.

The beginning of that preparation was set forth in the last Lesson for August, on **1 Kings xix. 1-8**. The Prophet's faith was tested and strengthened in the flight from Jezebel's wrath in Jezreel to Jehovah's presence at Horeb, in which he was guided and sustained by the angel of Jehovah. In the present Scripture that preparation is completed, as the Prophet is given a new revelation of God and of His chosen way of manifesting Himself and accomplishing His purposes; as he is assured that he is to have the aid of strong human helpers in the new task of educating and disciplining Israel, to which he is to be sent; and as he is assured of the sympathy and co-operation of the seven thousand faithful ones in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal. It is easy to see how this training prepared the Prophet for a future in which the stern **judgment** (wherein he seems naturally to have delighted) was to be tempered with **mercy**.

This is all that is embraced in the Lesson proper, but the **Lesson as extended** (including **1 Kings xx.-xxii**. and **2 Kings i.**) may be looked upon as recording a **twofold work of the Prophet** for Jehovah, accomplished before his translation, in prosecuting the task of mingled mercy and judgment assigned him for Israel. In order to understand the record of this work certain things need to be constantly borne in mind.

A **first thing** is that, in the view of the sacred penman, the main concern is always the **covenant relation of the Kings of Israel to Jehovah** as the only true God and their God. Every effort put forth, whether patriotic or divine, was to hold them to loyalty to Him. **Elijah always appears for Jehovah**.

A **second** is that a new and powerful agency in the work of reform and

education appears in the **Schools of the Prophets**, in which the so-called Sons of the Prophets came together about a prophet to be taught by him (2 Kings iv. 1; vi. 1, 2), and to organize for religious effort and influence. It is true that the prophets gathered in Ramah to undertake religious work under Samuel (1 Sam. xix. 18-20), so that he has been looked upon as the founder of the Schools of the Prophets; but the prophet communities in the days of Ahab differed from these and were doubtless founded by Elijah. They furnish an "actual and important testimony that this Prophet not only stepped forth publicly, in fiery zeal and heroic strength, to battle against idolatry, but also, at the same time, worked to build up and lay foundations." His success in this sphere is witnessed by the numbers that he gathered about him (1 Kings xviii. 4; 2 Kings ii. 16; iv. 43; vi. 1); by the fact that there were Schools at all the chief centers of idolatry; and by the manner in which they endured the bloody persecution under Ahab and Jezebel. "How much the heart of the faithful servant of God was set upon these foundations is evident from the fact that he visited the three schools at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho before his departure, and spoke to them for their encouragement and consolation."

A third thing is that **Elijah's shaping influence** as Jehovah's representative (as "standing before Jehovah," 1 Kings xvii. 1), is to be traced in all this period, either directly or through the Prophets, seeking to guide the movements, political as well as religious, so as to hold Israel to the covenant.

A fourth thing to be noted is that **three religious parties** entered into the problem in Israel, with which Elijah and the Scriptural record have to do: the worshippers of Jehovah through the Calves at Bethel and Dan, who had largely degenerated into crass idolaters; the true worshippers of Jehovah, the dissenters from Jeroboam's state religion; and the worshippers of the Tyrian Baal, whose licentious cult was introduced and made the state religion by Jezebel. (See August number, p. 487.) The leaders in the religious conflict at the outset were the strong Prophet seeking to bring back the apostate King and people to loyalty to Jehovah; the unscrupulous and detestable Queen, aiming by marriage alliance and artful device and bloody persecution, to convert all Israel, and if possible Judah also, to the religion of Baal; and the weak and conscienceless Ahab taking counsel of his fears, whether of Prophet or of Queen.

Bearing in mind these things, **Elijah's twofold work** may be taken up more intelligently and profitably.

1. Elijah, as the representative of Jehovah's mercy to Israel, patriotically co-operated with Ahab in a **great military crisis**, seeking to impress upon him the covenant claims of Jehovah. 1 Kings xxii.

Ahab is prophetically directed in repelling the two invasions of Israel by Benhadad II. of Damascus and his allies. (See August number, p. 490.) This was done specifically to demonstrate to King and people that **Jehovah**, the God who made the royal covenant with David (2 Sam. vii. 12-16), is **Israel's God still** with His covenant claim upon them (1 Kings xx. 13). In the first invasion, in accordance with the word of a certain Prophet, Benhadad and his thirty-two drunken allies are put to flight among the hills by the 232 young men of the princes of the provinces. Believing that **Jehovah** was a God of the hills only, and not of the valleys also, Benhadad returns later and is defeated and taken prisoner in the valley of Jezreel. Jehovah was thus shown to be the universal God. Instead of recognizing

this demonstration of Jehovah's place and rights, and slaying the King who had challenged them, the weak and wicked Ahab called him **Brother** and made covenant with him.

It was then that an unnamed Prophet of Jehovah, who had caused himself to be smitten and wounded, pronounced the sentence upon Ahab: "Thy life shall go for his life," in the scene so graphically depicted in this chapter,—a sentence for his recreancy to the covenant. The mercy and judgment combined seem to have had no effect upon Ahab, except to send him back to Jezreel gloomy and angry, and the more ready to be led into new rebellion against Jehovah, to which his own covetousness speedily opened the way, into which the plottings of Jezebel made it easy for him to enter.

2. Elijah appears as the prominent actor in the Scriptural record of the **crimes against Jehovah** that led to the destruction of Ahab and his House. 1 Kings xxi.-2 Kings i.

The following points are suggested for use in the study of this Scripture, which completes the story of Elijah's influence and work till his translation:

(1) The crime of Ahab and Israel against Naboth, and the sentence upon Ahab and his House, pronounced and then suspended. 1 Kings xxi.

When Ahab, in consequence of the twofold victory, found himself in the enjoyment of peace, instead of turning his thoughts to Jehovah, who had given him the victory, he is found planning to beautify the garden of his summer palace at Jezreel. This plan led him to covet the near-by vineyard of Naboth and to make demand for it. The reply of Naboth was, literally: "Far is it for me from Jehovah that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee" (ch. xxi. 3). This language implies—

(a) That Naboth was a **worshipper of Jehovah** and had not bowed the knee to Baal, and that he belonged to those who had remained faithful notwithstanding the widespread persecution and the popular apostasy.

(b) That he held the alienation of his vineyard to be a **sin against Jehovah**, the transgression of a direct command of Jehovah recorded in the Law (Numbers xxxvi. 7).

The plot of Jezebel therefore involved, in addition to a horrible crime, a formal **repudiation of the law and authority of Jehovah**, in which the King and the rulers joined her.

For this act, not merely as a crime, but as a **rejection of Jehovah**, the Prophet Elijah was sent to announce personally—no one but the terrible Prophet of Carmel seemed equal to the message—the awful retribution that should fall upon the guilty King and Queen and upon the whole House of Ahab (verses 17-24).

The terrified Ahab was driven to the outward forms of repentance, and in view of his thus humbling himself **before Jehovah**—although here as elsewhere in his career one looks in vain for even a shadow of genuine moral or religious faith or expression, or of real recognition of Jehovah as the covenant God of Israel—Jehovah graciously sent Elijah with a message deferring the ruin of Ahab's House until the day of his son (verses 25-29).

The Divine estimate of Ahab and of his sin is given parenthetically (verses 25, 26):

"But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of Jehovah, whom Jezebel, his wife, stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom Jehovah cast out before the children of Israel."

He had abandoned himself entirely to the idolatry on account of which God had destroyed the Canaanites and given their land to the Israelites.

(2) The wicked alliance of Ahab and Jehoshaphat and their war against Syria led to the further repudiation of the authority of Jehovah, and furnished occasion for the execution of the sentence upon Ahab. 1 Kings xxii. 1-50.

Both Kings allow themselves to be led astray by the 400 calf-worshipping prophets of Ahab, claiming to be prophets of Jehovah, and reject the warning of Micaiah, the true Prophet of Jehovah. The prophecy of Elijah was literally fulfilled when the chariot of Ahab was washed in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood.

(3) The restoration of the false religion in aggravated form by Ahaziah, Ahab's son—including that of his father, of his mother and of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat (1 Kings xxii. 5-7)—and his appeal in his sickness to Baal-zebub, involve a **flagrant rejection of Jehovah** (2 Kings i. 2), for which sin Elijah is sent to the King to announce his death, in the further execution of the sentence against the House of Ahab. 1 Kings xxii. 51—2 Kings i.

This restoration of idolatry **abrogated the royal covenant with Jehovah**. Here again Elijah, the stern Prophet of Carmel, called probably from Carmel itself, seemed the only appropriate messenger. "**As regards his relation to Jehovah**, which was the main point with every Israelitish King," Ahaziah, as already seen, was one of the very worst of them all. He showed his defiance by sending bands of soldiers to seize Elijah, with the evident intention of destroying him. The miracles with which his defiance was met failed to have the least softening effect upon him. And when the angel of Jehovah sent the Prophet to the death-chamber with the death-sentence: "Thus saith Jehovah, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the God of Ekron, is it because there is no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die" (verse 16), there is no hint of even such a recognition of Jehovah in terror as Ahab gave when the death-sentence was passed upon him. The swift execution follows the word: "So he died according to the word of Jehovah, which Elijah had spoken" (verse 17). It was the last recorded word and act of the Prophet of Judgment in dealing with the degenerate Kings of Israel.

The sin of Ahaziah would seem to have filled full the cup of Israel's iniquity, and yet Jehovah mercifully granted further respite during the reign of **Jehoram**, when Elisha had taken the place of Elijah. It was after sixteen years of long-suffering that sentence was executed upon Jehoram, the grandson of Ahab; that Jezebel was thrown from the palace window and devoured by dogs under the walls of Jezreel; and that Jehu blotted out the House of Ahab.

The entire Lesson, as thus extended to the close of Elijah's active career and still further to the destruction of the House of Ahab, brings out this with awful emphasis, **the sinfulness and destructiveness of the sin of rejecting Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, for other gods**. The perpetual lesson is: In obedience to Jehovah is life; in disobedience to Him is death.

II. **The Second Lesson** for September, entitled "**Elijah Taken up into Heaven**," closes the Prophet's great career. Its Scripture, which has no parallel, is **2 Kings ii. 1-11**.

It is unnecessary to dwell here upon the record of the **miraculous removal of Elijah** at the close of his mission. The narrative is familiar, simple, clear and straightforward. The objections urged against it are merely the old objections to the Supernatural, i.e., to God in human history. merely the old objections to the Supernatural, i.e., to God in redemption.

In studying this Scripture, however, one or two points need to be borne in mind.

1. Elijah's translation was the only suitable close to his mission.

As Bähr phrases it (Lange's Commentary on Kings):

"The peculiar mode of Elijah's removal stands in an unmistakable relation to his vocation, which consisted in this, that he was to be, by word and deed, the herald and the instrument of the divine judgment against apostasy and idolatry, and was to renew the broken covenant (1 Kings xvii.). His entire public life and work had, therefore, the character of that of judge—on the one side destroying and consuming, and on the other reforming and constructing. Just as everywhere in the Scriptures, and especially in the Old Testament, **fire** is the form in which all the action of God as Judge presents itself (Deut. iv. 24; ix. 3; xxxii. 22; Num. xi. 1, 2; xvi. 35; Isa. iv. 4; xxvi. 11; xxix. 6; Ps. xxi. 9; l. 3; Zeph. i. 18; Heb. xii. 29; 2 Pet. iii. 7, 12; etc.), so the words of this instrument of the divine energy were words of fire, and His deeds were deeds of fire. . . . When now this fire-prophet is removed and carried away by God in a fiery storm, it is clear that it is not a divine judgment which was executed upon him, but a **divine confirmation of his work, in its predominant aspect, viz.: the judicial**; so that it is, as it were, the **seal of God** upon that which Elijah was for his own and for all future times, viz., the surety for, and the herald of, every great judgment-day of God, i.e., of the fire, which acts as well to purify and build up as to destroy and devastate (Mal. iii. 2; iv. 1-6). . . . His translation, far from being indifferent, accidental, and insignificant, bore the same stamp as his temporal and earthly appearance, and corresponded perfectly to his peculiar and unparalleled position in the divine economy of salvation. Only in this way can his removal and the mode of it be explained.

The manner of his removal thus perpetuated and intensified the power of the Prophet's influence, and greatly helped his successor, Elisha.

2. The Scriptures elsewhere abundantly recognize the facts of Elijah's history and his exalted position in the work of redemption.

He was a **second Moses**. "Moses founded the theocracy, Elijah renewed it, and both appear at the same time, on the Mount of Transfiguration, to **Him** who completed it (Matt. xvii. 13)."

The close of his career was unique. Each of the three great dispensations of religion has its illustration of a triumphant ascension into heaven. "The translation of Enoch occurred in the patriarchal age. The scene on Olivet represents the ascension or translation of the Christian era. And the remarkable translation of Elijah very appropriately belongs to the prophetic age."

He also held an exalted place as an earnest preacher of righteousness. As such he was the type of John the Baptist (Luke i. 17; Matt. xi. 14), and the kind of preacher needed in a degenerate and self-indulgent age.

III. The Third Lesson for September has for its Topic "**Israel Reproved.**" Its Scripture is **Amos v. 4-15**. The passage may be profitably

compared with the book of Hosea, the contemporary of Amos, especially with the concluding call of that Prophet to repentance (Hosea xiv.). The corresponding history of Israel, in the light of which the message of Amos is to be understood, is that of the time of Jeroboam II., and is found in 2 Kings beginning with chapter xiv. 23. The corresponding history of Judah is that of the time of Amaziah and Uzziah, and is found in 2 Kings beginning with chapter xiv., and in 2 Chronicles beginning with chapter xxv.

This Lesson is, of course, far removed in point of time from the one that precedes it. Prophecy has passed from its third stage, in which the Prophet appeared as reformer struggling against the evils that came from successive and persistent breaches of the national covenant with Jehovah and threatened the destruction of the Chosen People, to its third stage, in which the Prophets of the Written Prophecies, in despair of present restoration by existing agencies, sought to rouse the kings and people by directing their attention to impending judgment and future deliverance. (See August number, p. 478.) The somewhat remote link of connection between the Second and Third Lessons is, that they both have to do with Israel, or the Northern Kingdom.

To understand the message of Amos it is necessary to know his place in the history and the task assigned to him in the movement of redemption.

An outline of the development of the Law in the Written Prophecies as "the Struggle of the Prophets against Judgment" has already been given, in the January number of this monthly (p. 50), and in more extended form in "Bible League Primer No. 1" (p. 57). Reference for details must here be made to those presentations.

The Prophet Amos belongs to the first of the five stages of this Struggle, the prophetic effort to save both Judah and Israel from complete apostasy and consequent destruction by Assyria. To this **Assyrian Period** belong Seven of the Sixteen Written Prophecies. One set of these prophets wrought for Israel, another set for Judah, and one Prophet (Micah) for both. Following the traditional order (generally accepted as the historical), and representing the Prophets for Israel by italics and the Prophet with a twofold mission by capitals, the Prophets of the Assyrian Period stand thus: *Hosea*, Joel, *Amos*, Obadiah, *Jonah*, Isaiah, MICAH.

This gives the **setting of Amos** in this first great struggle with the World-Empires, a struggle that was apparently fruitless—except as it helped to save a remnant—inasmuch as Israel perished in spite of all the prophetic efforts. The activity of these Prophets began in the time of Jeroboam II. and continued to that of Hoshea and the downfall of Samaria, i.e., from 825 to 721 B. C.

The **mission of Amos** belongs to the opening of this period. His message must be studied in the light of the condition of Israel in the reign of Jeroboam II., and of the tasks assigned to the other Prophets with whom Amos co-operated.

I. **The condition of Israel** may be gathered from the contemporary

history in 2 Kings, and from the writings of Amos himself and of Hosea. It was a time of great outward national, political and economic prosperity, reminding one of the glory of the age of Solomon; but of unspeakable moral and religious corruption. This is the way in which Dr. Cunningham Geikie paints the appalling picture,—as cited by Peloubet in his "Notes:"

"The spiritual condition of Israel grew dark as its material glory brightened. Amos and Hosea paint a sad picture. Wealth accumulated, but men decayed. The rich grew richer, the poor grew poorer. The apparent prosperity was only a phosphorescence on decay. Society, from the highest to the lowest, had become corrupt. Drunkenness and debauchery spread. Even the women were given to their cups. The great ladies of Samaria are described as greedy for drink. Such sensuality and profuseness led to all other vices. The passion for money became general. Tumults, from such oppression, filled the streets of Samaria. The mansions of the great were stored with the plunder of their poorer neighbors; and matters grew worse toward the close of Jeroboam's reign, and in the years that followed his death. No truth, or mercy, or knowledge of God, we are told, was left in the land. Swearing, lying, homicide, stealing, adultery, housebreaking, and murder ran riot."

It was to Israel in such moral plight that Amos, the herdman of Tekoa—a layman and a countryman, but by no means an uncultured man—was sent with his message. The hopefulness of results in the Prophet's case may be judged from the fate of the preacher's message when addressed in our own age to the classes socially dominant, who seem to be easily over-matching Israel in greed for gold, profuseness of luxury, rejection of moral restraints, free indulgence in lawlessness and vice, and open defiance of God! In such conditions nothing short of **physical calamities that come right home to the godless themselves can be expected to startle them into thoughtfulness.** So Amos appears as "**the Prophet of physical calamities portending national judgments.**" This furnishes the key to the Prophet's message. It contains the prediction—

(1) Of Divine judgments to come, because of sin, upon the group of Nations associated with Israel (chapters i.-ii.).

(2) Of greater judgments, especially destruction by the mightier Assyrian, to come upon Israel because of their enhanced guilt in view of their violated covenant with Jehovah (chapters iii.-vi.).

(3) Of a series of progressive Divine judgments, set forth in symbolic visions, to come upon Israel and to end in the destruction of the Temple and of all the votaries of idolatry (chapters vii.-ix. 10).

Divine grace adds at the close a prediction of the restoration of the faithful Remnant and of the future Messianic blessedness (chapters ix. 11-15).

It is in the midst of this whirlwind of Divine judgments—as an incident connected with the prediction of the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians—that the Scripture of the present Lesson is to be found, to which, for practical purposes, is given the title "Israel Reproved." For the under-

standing of its relations, historical, literary and religious, it needs to be taken back to its proper place and setting.

2. It was suggested that in the study of Amos light should be sought from the prophetic tasks assigned to his contemporaries in Israel. There is barely space for a word concerning one of these, Hosea, "the Prophet of God's grace." Hosea is sent to illustrate the matchless grace of God by a startling picture of his own dealings with a prodigal wife. This is Israel's case with the covenant Jehovah, who is still ready to receive back and save the apostate nation. Against Israel, already in a state of moral, political and religious collapse, because of its breaking the Law of Jehovah, Assyria, an insatiable and irresistible foe, is advancing for its destruction. Impending judgment is held out at the command of the God of love, as the last means of rousing to repentance and saving a Remnant. Hosea's portrayal in his graphic way of the absolute moral and religious rottenness of Israel needs to be added to the milder picture of Amos to give a complete view of the situation at its worst and to aid in the full understanding of that Prophet's message.

The Biography of Elisha.

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The Biblical writers are more concerned with the misdeeds of the kings of the dynasty of Omri than with their greatness; but the greatness is distinctly implied, provided we read with sufficient care. Omri became king in spite of the protracted resistance of Tibni. Within a short time he had made a marriage alliance with Phoenicia, had become master of Moab, had reversed the chronic condition of hostility with Judah, had founded a new capital, and, apparently, had established a policy which was in the main carried out by his descendants. His name does not disappear at his death, but is referred to afterward (2 Kings viii. 26). The glimpses we have of Ahab indicate magnificence of living and ability in administration, in spite of his vacillating course between the influence of Elijah and that of Jezebel. One who has read the Biblical accounts with care ought not to be surprised at the prominence with which these men appear in the Assyrian and the Moabite records. On the Moabite stone Omri is the great name, his son or sons being spoken of but not named. In the Assyrian records Ahab is personally prominent, but Jehu is spoken of as the son of Omri, and Omri's name long continues to be attached to the land of northern Israel.

The successive stories in 2 Kings (ii.-ix.) concerning Elisha are such as might easily be independent of chronological order, but they do not seem to be so. If Elijah wrote a letter to Jehoram of Judah after the latter mur-

dered his brothers (2 Chronicles xxi. 12-15), then the events of 2 Kings iii. preceded those of 2 Kings ii. Possibly the writer's reason for changing the order is that he may finish the story of Elijah before taking up continuously that of Elisha. However this may be, if we transpose these two chapters, and count the date of the story of the Shunammite woman as that of the raising of her son from the dead, we probably have the incidents of Elisha's life related in the order in which they occurred. And if we transpose these incidents into the form of an orderly biography of Elisha, that biography will also be a narrative of the history of Israel for the time.

From the incident when Elijah found Elisha plowing with twelve yoke of oxen (1 Kings xix. 19-21) we learn that Elisha was a man of property, who might, if he had chosen, have lived a life of luxury. The whole account we have of him makes the impression that he was a man of gentlemanly breeding and culture and dress and mien. No specific statement to this effect is made, but all readers instinctively think thus of him, in contrast with their thought of the roughness of Elijah.

Elisha's Social Standing

His first appearance is in the earlier stages of the story of the Shunammite woman. As we have already seen in considering the lessons on Elijah, this was earlier than the first recorded incidents

Elisha Visiting Shunem. 2 Kings iv. 8-17 in the life of Elijah, though Elijah's actual career must have begun some time before. This earliest picture of Elisha

is of his making trips from time to time across the country in his character as "man of God" (2 Kings iv. 9), and being entertained by the Shunammite family. This part of the story presumably covers some years. It is natural to think that Elisha was going from one community of "the sons of the prophets" to another, strengthening the purpose of the members, and giving counsel in questions that might arise. The prophets had some kind of a post in Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 30, 31; 2 Kings iv. 22-25). In other passages we find them mentioned as at such places as Bethel and Gilgal and Jericho (e. g. 2 Kings ii.). The Tishbites or "settlement men" of Gilead, of whom Elijah was one (1 Kings xvii. 1), are probably to be thought of as similar communities of men under prophetic influence. In these early years Elisha was not the official head of the prophetic companies. Perhaps we may best think of him as a volunteer worker going from place to place in the interests of the movement for a purer worship of Jehovah and a more complete obedience to Him.

At this time the Assyrians were looking covetously at the Mediterranean regions, but the peril had not become serious. The Moabite rebellion had not yet begun. The policy of closer relations with Judah was in progress. It was within these years that Jehoram of Judah and Athaliah of Israel were married. If any one should say that the prophetic party expected happy results from this marriage, and therefore rejoiced in it, and that some prophet wrote the forty-fifth Psalm in cele-

bration of it, he would say that which is in no way improbable, though he would not be able to prove it to be fact. Elisha's asking the Shunammite if she desired to be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the host (2 Kings iv. 13) shows that he was a prominent man in public affairs, and that he had influence at court. It could not have been pleasing to the prophets that Jezebel and others were worshipping Baal, but this was to them only a bitter thing among many things that were sweet.

We next meet Elisha when he is set apart to be the attendant and the successor of Elijah. The situation has radically changed. The marriage with the royal line of Judah has disappointingly

Elisha as Elijah's Minister. 1 Kings xix. 15-21

turned out to be for the glory of Baal and not of Jehovah. Ahab and Jezebel have established the religion of Baal in northern Israel, and in the interests of that religion have been slaughtering the prophets and their followers. In resisting the persecution Elijah has threatened Ahab with famine, and has withdrawn from communication with him for three years. The famine has had its effect on the mind of the king. Elijah has returned, and the affair at Carmel has occurred, warning the persecutors that they cannot slay Jehovah's servants with impunity, and appealing to Jehovah's people to return to Him. Meanwhile the clouds are darkening on the Assyrian horizon. Shalmanezar has become king, and his intention to conquer the west has become evident. The peoples are agitated over their combinations to resist the great invader. It is in these circumstances that Elijah, on his return from Horeb, designates Elisha "to be prophet in his room."

Whether Elisha was anointed (1 Kings xix. 16) otherwise than by having Elijah's mantle cast upon him (1 Kings xix. 19; 2 Kings ii. 13) may be a question. At all events he was not thereby set apart to be a prophet, but to take Elijah's place. Whatever else this involved, he became by it the prospective head of the communities of the sons of the prophets. In accepting the call Elisha made a public sacrificial feast (that is what "slew" means in 1 Kings xix. 21), using the farm tools as fuel. This would seem to be an emblem of his renouncing other business in the interests of his vocation. His father and mother were living (ver. 20), and there is no indication that he renounced them or his property. But he "went after Elijah and ministered unto him."

Elijah's condition of mind and of body was such that he needed the presence of a friend who should be able alike to share his important administrative labors and to care for him in his hours of weakness and depression. The task was not always an easy or agreeable one for a luxuriously bred man like Elisha, but his character was strong enough to abide the test. We may be sure that he was not far away when Elijah rebuked Ahab in the affair of Naboth (1 Kings xxi.), and we have details of his ministrations at the close of Elijah's life (2 Kings ii.). But there

were other important affairs in which the old prophet and his minister had their parts to perform.

Elisha became Elijah's attendant not long before the year, probably the nineteenth year of Ahab, in which occurred the events recorded in the twentieth chapter of 1 Kings. These events have already been discussed under the lessons concerning Elijah. Of course the prophets that figure in the chapter (verses 13, 22, 28, 35) were men who were in relations with the great leaders of the prophets. The persecutions had been checked by the punishment inflicted at Carmel; the prophets were still numerous and influential; and they were on hand to aid their king in his dealings with foreign enemies. And when, in the twenty-first year of Ahab, the combined armies of Benhadad and Ahab and their allies met the Assyrians in battle, we may be sure that the prophets made their influence felt on the patriotic side.

In considering the life of Elijah we have already seen that Shalmanezzer, in the twenty-second year of Ahab, was operating at the head waters of the Tigris, too far away to interfere in Palestinian affairs. The Biblical narrative for that year is filled with events.

At the beginning of the year occurred Jehoshaphat's visit to Ahab "at an end of years" (2 Chronicles xviii. 2), and the incident of the prophesying of Micaiah the son of Imlah (2 Kings xxii.; 2 Chronicles xviii.). Ahab has contrived to surround himself with prophets who speak in the name of Jehovah, but who are of a different stripe from Elijah and Elisha. A little later in the year Jehoshaphat went with Ahab to Ramoth-gilead, and Ahab was mortally wounded in battle, so that Ahaziah became sole king. He proved himself a follower of Baal after Jezebel's own heart (1 Kings xxii. 52).

At the time of Jehoshaphat's visit to Ahab, we may assume, Jehoram of Judah was in high favor, and the Baalite party in Judah was gaining ground. But the death of Ahab seems to have had a sobering effect on Jehoshaphat. On his return from Ramoth-gilead he showed himself amenable to the counsel of the prophet Jehu, and entered upon a work of strenuous reform (2 Chronicles xix.). The effect of this must necessarily have been to retire Jehoram from public influence, and perhaps to remove him for the time being from the line of succession to the crown, thus placing him in the attitude of a disappointed aspirant and a possible revolutionist, and accounting for his insurrection four years later (2 Chronicles xxi. 4).

Meanwhile Mesha of Moab rebelled against northern Israel (2 Kings i. 1; iii. 5), the rebellion, notice, following the death of Ahab and not that of Ahaziah. The operations described in 2 Chronicles xx. are to be regarded as the opening campaign of the rebellion, directed against Ahaziah's ally, Jehoshaphat. It is plausible to think that it was stirred up by Assyrian intrigue, and this favors the idea that it is the event celebrated in Psalm lxxxiii (see especially verse 8). The invasion was by an ill-

compacted horde of peoples, and was defeated by the feuds that arose among them.

Ahaziah and Jehoshaphat formed an alliance to send ships on distant voyages through the Red Sea (1 Kings xxii. 48-49; 2 Chronicles xx. 35-37), but the scheme failed, the contract being rebuked by a prophet, the contracting parties disagreeing, and the ships being broken.

The career of Ahaziah was cut short. He met with an accident which terminated fatally, but not till it had become evident that a renewed demonstration of Jehovah's ability to protect his prophets was needed. The demonstration was given in the fire from heaven which destroyed the men who were sent to arrest Elijah (2 Kings i.).

Within this same year, the twenty-second year of Ahab, Jehoram of Israel succeeded to the throne, inaugurating a partially changed policy. He maintained the religion of Baal in honor and magnificence (2 Kings x. 18ff.), but as the state religion he returned to the calf worship established by Jeroboam (2 Kings iii. 3). Apparently he was not a persecutor of the prophets.

Early in his reign Elisha again appears. Jehoram of Israel, with Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom, take the field to reduce the Moabite rebels, and are saved from calamity by the intervention of the prophet. According to the Biblical account the expedition against Moab lies gained advantages over Moab that were for the time decisive; and nothing on the Moabite stone contradicts this, since Mesha's victories belong later.

During Jehoram's fragmentary first year Shalmanezar was, as we have seen, on the upper Tigris. During Jehoram's second and third years Shalmanezar had his hands full in Babylonia. The following year, however, he crossed the Euphrates, captured a hundred towns, and defeated Benhadad and his confederates. He defeated them again in Jehoram's fifth year, and captured countless cities. It was a time of turmoil in Palestine. The fifth year of Jehoram of Israel is another of the years in which the events mentioned in the Bible are numerous.

In this year Jehoram of Judah came to the front again. By successful insurrection he slew his brothers, and made himself king coregnant with Jehoshaphat (2 Kings viii. 16-24; 2 Chron. xxi. 2ff.). He did what he could to render the influence of Baal paramount in Judah, and was in all ways a most unsuccessful king.

To this year belong the latest events of the life of Elijah. We are told of a writing which he sent to Jehoram of Judah after Jehoram killed his brothers (2 Chronicles xxi. 12-15), and we have a detailed account of his ascension to heaven in the midst of a squadron of chariots of fire. In this latter incident Elisha figures as prominently as Elijah, and he is at once accepted by the sons of the prophets as their chief, the successor of Elijah.

From this time Elisha is pre-eminently the miracle-working prophet.

Elisha at the Translation of Elijah.
2 Kings ii.

He smites the Jordan with Elijah's mantle, and it divides. He heals the water supply of Jericho (2 Kings ii. 19-22). On the death of Elijah the hostile spirit against the prophets begins again to manifest itself. There is no need of measures so severe as the slaughter of Baal's prophets at Carmel and the calling down of fire from heaven, but a milder measure to the same end was the tearing of the forty-two children by the two bears (2 Kings ii. 23-24). Assuming that these incidents are narrated in the order in which they occurred, they all belong, with the miracle of the oil (2 Kings iv. 1-7) and the raising of the Shunammite's son, to the fifth year of Jehoram of Israel, and to the part of the year not later than the harvest (2 Kings iv. 18-37). It must have been later in the same year that the Shunammite family, by the advice of Elisha, went to the Philistine country to sojourn (2 Kings viii. 1-6), for their stay there lasted seven years, and terminated before the overthrow of Jehoram. A famine that lasts seven years in a particular region is due in part to political causes, and the causes in this instance are not far to seek. Shunem was within reach of the devastations by Shalmanezar and by the armies that resisted him, and was on the path of the Syrian raids into Israel in the years when Syria and Israel were not in alliance to check the Assyrian.

The scarcity in the land affected the sons of the prophets at Gilgal, and led to the incident in which the prophet's meal proved an antidote to the death that was in the pot (2 Kings iv. 38-41). In a year soon after that, in a time of "fresh ears," just before the harvest, Elisha performed his miracle of multiplying the loaves and first fruits (42-44).

Shalmanezar says that in his fourteenth year, the eighth year of Jehoram, he again routed the armies of the confederates. This was for the fourth time in nine years, besides several other expeditions in which he crossed the Euphrates and operated in the region. Nevertheless it appears that the region remained unsubdued. This can not be accounted for without supposing that there was at least one great man among these resisting peoples. As Benhadad and Damascus were constantly at the head of the confederacy, the great man was doubtless a man of Damascus. He certainly was not Benhadad, for we know enough about Benhadad to be sure that he was not great. Presumably the brains of this confederacy which thus for so long held back the overwhelming armies of Assyria was one "Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria," of whom it is said that he "was a great man before his master and honorable, because by him Jehovah had given salvation unto Syria" (2 Kings v. 1). If we suppose this, and suppose that the healing of Naaman occurred after the Assyrians had withdrawn in the eighth year of Jehoram, we shall find the Biblical narrative exceedingly graphic.

In this same year occurred the death of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah.

His restraining influence being removed, the affairs of both kingdoms sped rapidly toward the impending catastrophe.

Meanwhile the prophetic communities seem to have been growing. We have one instance, that in connection with Elisha's miracle of causing the iron to swim (2 Kings vi. 1-7), of the providing of enlarged accommodations.

After the eighth year of Jehoram of Israel, Shalmanezar was kept busy in the east for two or three years. Of course these years were occupied by hostilities, petty or important, between Syria and Israel. There **Elisha and the Syrian Wars.** was a series of Syrian raids (2 Kings vi. 8-23). These ceased after the affair of Dothan. Then in a more serious **2 Kings vi 8-vii** campaign Benhadad besieged Samaria (2 Kings vi. 24-vii. In the panic among the Syrians, by which the siege was broken up, we have a significant glimpse into political changes that have taken place. Benhadad has lost his grip upon the kings of the region. It seems to him possible that Israel may have combined them overwhelmingly against him. Perhaps Naaman was now out of office, and had no successor. Throughout these affairs, so say the Biblical records, the king of Israel had in Elisha a much needed and effective supporter.

The end of the dynasty came not very late in the twelfth year of Jehoram. Just at the opening of that year Jehoram of Judah died (2 Chronicles xxi. 19), and his son Ahaziah became king. About the same time **Elisha and the Jehu Revolution.** Hazael of Damascus murdered Benhadad and succeeded him (2 Kings viii. 7-15, 28-29). Jehu revolted, and mercilessly put to death all the males of the blood of Omri, including Ahaziah of Judah, and all the worshippers of Baal **2 Kings viii. 7-x** who could be found. That year, Shalmanezar says, he marched once more to these regions. He found no Benhadad, no banded confederates. Hazael resisted him, and was terribly defeated; but others of the nations and kings that had been members of the confederacy now made their submission, and paid tribute; and among these was "Jehu, the son of Omri."

The prophets had something to do with this revolution. Elijah had been commissioned to anoint Jehu over Israel and Hazael over Syria (1 Kings xix. 15, 16). Elisha knew beforehand of Hazael's career (2 Kings viii. 12), and directly incited the deeds of Jehu (2 Kings ix. 1). We have no information as to whether he approved the submission to Assyria.

Elisha was associated with three kings of the line of Jehu, but the records are mainly silent concerning his relations with them. He can not have been much better pleased with the new dynasty than with the old. Jehu eradicated Baal, but he practised the sin of Jeroboam. Under him "Jehovah began to cut Israel short" (2 Kings x. 32). Assyria proved unable to protect her vassal. Hazael had his will, and a cruel will it was, with the country east of the Jordan. Mesha says, on the Moabite stone, that before the extinction of the Omri dynasty he had made Moab independent, and that he followed this up by successful and cruel ag-

gressive warfare against Israel. Under Jehu's successor, Jehoahaz, both Israel and Judah came perilously near to being completely subjugated by Hazael. Then the tide turned. Rimman-nirari III. of Assyria broke the power of Damascus, and took tribute from most of the surrounding nations. Jehoash, the successor of Jehoahaz, began to gain victories over Hazael's weaker son, Benhadad. Soon after the humbling of Damascus the power of Assyria herself waned for a time. Jeroboam II. in Israel and Uzziah in Judah took advantage of the situation, and raised the two kingdoms to such greatness as they had not before attained since Solomon. Elisha lived just long enough to see the first slight beginnings of this reflux tide.

According to the Bible numbers his public career was a long one, not much less than seventy years, from the time when he began visiting the family at Shunem. We are to think of him as a middle-aged man during the years from the translation of Elijah to the revolution. Not much less than forty-five years after the revolution, the young king Jehoash, grandson to Jehu, visited the old prophet, then on his deathbed. Directed by the prophet, Jehoash opened the window eastward, and shot the arrows that betokened Jehovah's deliverance from Syria. Alas, the man of God had to witness the same spirit of laxness that had so largely frustrated the efforts of his long lifetime; the prince smote thrice and stayed, instead of smiting till he was bidden to stay.

Then Elisha died, and had only an inconspicuous burial, but this lack of honor resulted in God's bestowing honor upon him. The hostilities inaugurated by Mesha had not yet ceased, the land being infested by Moabitish brigands. Through fear of them there was an attempt to bury another man in Elisha's easily opened grave; and the attempt proved that Jehovah could manifest. His power even through the bones of the miracle-working prophet.

ROGER'S REASONS.¹

Rev. John Urquhart, Cambuslang, Scotland.

My Dear Graham—I got your note, and you would have had an earlier reply had you been more reasonable. But what a task to burden a busy man with—to tell you “the whole” of that Sunday's talk in Norway! My dear man, have you no conscience left?

¹ This paper is a reprint of the first half of a booklet of 44 pages, soon to be issued in cheap form by The Gospel Publishing Company, of New York City. This portion is especially valuable as meeting the more common of the current scientific objections, urged with such constant persistence and unreason by unscientific men. The form of dialogue given to the argument will be found to add to the freshness of the presentation.

Well, I suppose I had better buckle to and do my best; but you must take it as it comes. We were five, and were at time a “merry party.” You know Brown and myself well enough, and I may save my descriptive powers till I come to the others. But let me say, in passing, that Brown has developed into a Broad Churchman. I fancy this is due to the stay at Göttingen, with which he rounded off his student days and perfected his German, an accomplishment which occasionally served us well during our