

ARTICLE V.

REMARKS ON THE DIVINE AUTHORITY AND AUTHENTICITY
OF THE PENTATEUCH.¹

By B. B. Edwards, Professor at Andover.

§ 6. *The Command of God in respect to the Destruction of the
Canaanites vindicated.*

THERE are many clear indications that the Author of nature, of the human mind and of the Scriptures is one and the same Being. The more profoundly we study the laws which regulate the material universe, the more closely we examine the structure and operations of our own moral and intellectual constitution and the more intimately we become acquainted with the Bible, the more convincing will this unity of authorship in them all appear.

And yet these various revelations which God has made of himself, often seem to come into direct conflict. There appear to be not only apparent discrepancies but positive contradictions. The course of nature apparently runs counter to the written revelation; the law engraven on the tablet of the heart does not accord with that on the tablet of stone.

Sometimes our misgivings can be quieted only by presumptive reasoning. Difficulties once existed which have disappeared; discrepancies which formerly perplexed the Christian student have vanished. The works and word of God, once on various points discordant, are no longer so. Therefore we have confident hope in respect to existing difficulties. Past experience on this subject furnishes presumptive ground for future reliance.

On no topic brought forward in the Pentateuch has greater perplexity been felt by the pious mind, than in relation to the command of God to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan; on none would there seem to be a more startling contrariety between the teachings of our moral nature and those of the Scriptures. Here, too, deism has, in all ages, forged one of its principal weapons. English infidelity, the parent of much of the Continental skepticism, has adduced it as a triumphant argument in its attack on

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revelation; and the impugners of the Old Testament in our own day and country have urged it as decisive against the divine authority of patriarchs and prophets.

It may not, therefore, be unseasonable to examine this point as fully as the limits which we have prescribed to ourselves will permit. If all Scripture be given by inspiration of God, if it be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, then every obstacle which lies in the way of its influence should, as far as possible, be removed. All those causes which occasion perplexity, misgiving, harassing doubt, or which furnish a plausible pretext for skepticism, should be fairly and fully considered. It is to be feared that the piety of some is built on a partial reception of divine truth, on what they view, subjectively, to be the instructions of the New Testament, as distinct from those of the Old. Such persons do not remember that if the declarations of our Lord and his apostles respecting Moses and the prophets be not admitted, then the whole basis of the new dispensation is undermined. All the declarations of Christ are to be received, or else all are to be rejected. If Moses were not inspired, then Peter and Paul spake not as the Holy Spirit moved them.

In discussing this subject, we will first state the prominent objections to which the command in question appears to be liable.

It will be recollected that it is of the most peremptory and exclusive character. It required an extirpation of the Canaanites root and branch. Women and children, the decrepit man as well as the armed warrior, were to be swept away. No truce was to be made, no mercy to be shown; it was excision without mitigation or exception. The more speedy and universal the infliction, the more pleasing to Jehovah.

Now this command seems to come into sad conflict with some of the original and most benevolent instincts of our nature. It would seem harshly to interfere with that fellow feeling common to man, to blot out those sensibilities which are weak enough at the best, but whose agency only, in the absence of revelation, renders human life tolerable. There are moments in the existence of the sternest men when sentiments of tender compassion are felt towards the most forlorn of the race, because they share in our common humanity. Names that will be the last to perish from the page of history are those whose philanthropy was most comprehensive. The man who has learned to look habitually with cordial good will upon the feeblest and most degraded, comes

the nearest to Him whose great object on earth was to reunite the family of man.

But the command, which we are considering, would seem to repress all these tendencies and to make the executors of it selfish, malevolent and ferocious. In order to cultivate benevolent dispositions, we must perform beneficent actions. But the edict of Jehovah to extirpate the Canaanites involved the necessity of inflicting all possible injury. Could philanthropy, or even the slightest feelings of humanity, exist in such scenes?

It was the maxim of a stern judge, Sir Matthew Hale, that "if in criminals it be a *measuring* cast, to incline to mercy and acquittal." It is a dictate of humanity and of sound reason, as well as a rule of the courts, that it is better that ten guilty persons escape, than that one innocent person should suffer. The foundations of justice are more endangered by a too rigorous enforcement than by an excessive leniency. Yet in the extermination of the inhabitants of Canaan, these merciful maxims were reversed or confounded. The destruction was indiscriminate. The whole Canaanitish race were involved in a common overthrow. The innocent, the comparatively innocent at least, suffered the same fate with the most atrocious criminals.

Again, the conquest of Canaan would seem to excuse, if not to justify, war, and war in its more offensive forms. It might appear that this terrible scourge of the human race would not receive even a tacit toleration on the part of the kind and universal Parent. What then shall be said of a war of aggression, of foreign conquest, of extermination? The battle-field when two armies meet in deadly encounter is not the most sorrowful spectacle which war presents. The combatants are hardened soldiers. The little boys who once played before their fathers' door have become bronzed veterans. They are familiarized to these fierce strifes and have become what the great captain of the present age declares soldiers ought to be, obedient machines, without a personal will or moral feeling. The most promising soldier is one who can most readily divest himself of the higher attributes of man. When such men fall in battle too, there is often no bitterness in death. The overwrought passion destroys or suspends all sensibility to bodily pain. In the maddening excitement, the deadly blow has been inflicted moments, possibly hours, before it is felt. Death on the battle-field is by no means always the king of terrors.

War is seen rather in the storming of a fort or in the sacking

of a town, especially in those few preceding hours which concentrate a life of agonizing expectation, when the faint possibility of escape or rescue every moment becomes weaker as one barrier after another is stormed. The horrors of war are felt when the wall is scaled, or the gate burst open. Its saddest sight is the domestic hearth reddened with blood, or the little child mourning on the bosom of its dying mother,—scenes in which imagination must not enter and which transform earth into hell.

Now parts of the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua in particular are a history of the sacking of cities, of the pillage of houses, of the destruction often of an unarmed and unresisting population. On the most favorable supposition, the track of the invading forces must have been marked with scenes that would appal every heart, except that of a trained warrior. A torrent of fire rolled over those fair fields that had flowed with milk and honey.

It was no light thing that would justify this invasion. No common cause, nothing short of invincible necessity would seem to furnish adequate grounds for the infliction of such dire calamities.

Again, this command seems to be adverse to many declarations found in the Old Testament, even in the earlier books.

The general rigor of the Mosaic system is abated by many kind and generous provisions. Not a few gentle precepts are thrown in to check the natural selfishness and cruelty of the people. Special and reiterated directions were given to the Israelites not to oppress or maltreat the stranger, the Egyptian, the Edomite and others. The Pentateuch is not destitute of those gracious pre-intimations of mercy towards the Gentiles, the full benefits of which, the prophet greater than Moses was to confer on the whole race.

Now why should the Canaanites be excluded from these benevolent provisions? Why should they be devoted to excision, while the tyrannical and oppressing Egyptians are carefully recommended to mercy?

The doctrine of personal responsibility is often and plainly taught in the Old Testament. The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Now this rule, perfectly reasonable, was not observed, it is said, with the Canaanites. The guiltless

son did bear the iniquity of his father. The aged polytheist and his innocent grandson, who could not discern between his right hand and his left, were involved in a common doom. The righteousness of ten righteous men, if such there were, did not save even themselves, much less the cities where they dwelt from destruction. The people of Nineveh, the cry of whose wickedness went up to heaven, were spared partly, it should seem, from the fact that there were more than six score thousand persons in it who could not discern between good and evil. Were the Canaanites worse than they? Was this doctrine of personal responsibility to hold in every case but theirs?

It is hardly necessary to say, that the destruction of the Canaanites seems to be adverse to the spirit and precepts of the New Testament. Our Lord came on an errand of good will to man; not to destroy human life, but to save it; not to call down fire from heaven but to heal every form of bodily disease and to summon the dead to life. The gospel breathes a spirit of the profoundest and most comprehensive charity. No one can lay claim to its blessings, who does not heartily love his enemies and do good to his bitterest foes. Every separating wall, national distinction and narrow-minded or sectarian prejudice, it sweeps away forever. Universal love is its characteristic mark; fervent charity, the most honorable badge of its disciples.

How can the precepts and spirit of such a religion be reconciled with the invasion of Canaan and the indiscriminate destruction of its inhabitants? In the one case, provision is made for the utmost care and tenderness in respect to the preservation of the earthly life; in the other, the infliction of the greatest possible amount of pain and distress is positively commanded.

The principal objection, however, which has been urged against the extirpation of the Canaanites relates to the employment of human agency in it. If the country were needed by the Israelites, if the wickedness of the people made them ripe for destruction, why were they not, it is asked, swept off by famine or fire? Why were they not overwhelmed, as Sodom was, in a moment? The mystery of this summary visitation we might not fully fathom. Yet its awful justice we should be constrained to adore. But if the Almighty entrusts the work to human agents; if he commissions an army to ravage the land; if he lays maledictions upon them if they do not fully perform the hard service; if he summons those to this work who have themselves hardly emerged from the savage state—not a few of

them as ripe for ruin as any whom they are directed to destroy,—then an unbridled license is given to some of the worst passions of our nature; temptations are spread before man, which, it should seem, are irresistible. He is divinely commissioned to do that which he cannot perform without committing sin. One community is to be destroyed by means which will make another ripe for the same overthrow. What more fatal school of vice exists than the camp and the battle-field? God, says the apostle, is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. Yet God commands that to be done whose certain tendency seems to be the indulgence of vindictive and cruel passions. Consequently, either the moral character of God is impaired, or a considerable part of the Pentateuch and Joshua is not inspired. There is no other alternative. The eternal foundations of justice are undermined, or those books are spurious or merely human productions. We must give up either the absolute perfection of the Almighty, or a part of his supposed revelation. The law written on the heart stands in irreconcilable hostility to that on the written page.

Various methods have been proposed to remove these formidable objections. The friends of the Bible have sometimes resorted to expedients by which the difficulties in the case do not seem to be fully appreciated. In their anxiety to vindicate the inspired page, they have multiplied arguments which are rather plausible than sound or pertinent.

1. The attempt is sometimes made to remove these objections by an appeal to the sovereignty and power of God. He made man. The nations of the earth are the product of his power; they lie in his hands as the clay in the hands of the potter. He holds the keys of death and of life. If he may create when and how he pleases, then he may recall or destroy what he has created. The life of the Canaanites was a mere trust. The Lender might justly demand it at his own discretion.

This method of solution, however, overlooks the main difficulty—the manner in which the destruction was accomplished—the employment of human agency. In the assertion of his absolute power over man's life, the Almighty would not, we are sure, impair his own attribute of justice, or infringe, in the slightest degree, the moral sense of his creatures. These must be preserved inviolate. Far be it from God to pervert or confound the moral sentiments of his creatures, or to sanction unlawful means for the attainment of desirable ends. The mere fact that he has

an uncontrolled right over human life cannot authorize acts which do not commend themselves to the enlightened judgment of his creatures. He has made them capable of seeing and approving the rightfulness of his actions and commands.

2. Another way in which it has been proposed to remove the difficulty is by representing it as designed for the trial of man's faith. The subject is confessedly encompassed with objections. It therefore presents an occasion for the exercise of profound reverence and of unquestioning faith. It was intended, like other "hard things" in the Scriptures, to be a test of moral character. The right use is made of it when we regard it as an inexplicable mystery. We must humbly adore rather than curiously examine. It is an important part of our moral probation quietly to acquiesce in the wisdom of Him whose path is often in the mighty waters.

But it ought, also, to be remembered that the rewards of faith come not with an *indolent* reception of the truth. Resignation, prior to inquiry, is not a duty. Faith cometh by hearing, by reading and by meditation; without these, it is dead. The events of Providence and the difficulties which we meet in the Scriptures are for the trial of our intellect as well as of our moral powers. Do we feel interest enough in these difficulties patiently to ~~examine them? Are we willing to~~ task our powers on these highest of all questions? The fatal sin of the ancient Israelites consisted in the fact that they would not consider the operations of God's hand. They were inclined slothfully to neglect to inquire into the reasons of his terrible judgments. The "hard things" which are found in the Scriptures, were intended for "our learning." Some of them can be solved by earnest and reverent investigation. It is the office, the noblest office of reason, to institute such an inquiry. It is only after we have made these efforts that we are authorized to rest and tranquilly appropriate to ourselves the promised blessings of an implicit faith.

Besides, this method of removing the difficulty will have no weight with a skeptical opposer. He has no faith to be tried. Our only course is to reason with him in respect to the objections that he propounds. We are to contend earnestly for the divine authority of every part of the Bible. It is our duty to search out and candidly present the best explanations which the nature of each particular case admits. One of the principal duties of Christians is, to vindicate the ways of God to men, and to convince gainsayers, not by calling upon them to believe without evidence, but by showing them what the evidence is, and that to reject it is to act in contrariety to their own reason and judgment.

It may be said, indeed, that this can never be done perfectly, that there is a depth that no line can fathom, a limit beyond which is darkness impenetrable, and that the objector will as really need faith or a believing spirit as any other man. This is undoubtedly true. Moral subjects do not admit of mathematical evidence. On every doctrine of the Bible, on every dispensation of Providence, difficulties will rest which no wit of man can solve. And yet they are accompanied with sufficient evidence. Every considerate man will admit them, notwithstanding their difficulties. So he acts in a thousand other cases. If reasons in favor of a particular course preponderate over the objections, then he is as really under obligations to pursue that course as if no difficulties existed. A doctrine of the Bible is attended with some real objections, yet the weight of evidence is in its favor; therefore whoever rejects it, pursues a course as unreasonable as it is pernicious. A command of God is accompanied with some unexplainable mysteries; yet if it has solid arguments in its favor, those mysteries constitute no real objection.

3. The extraordinary wickedness of the Canaanites is commonly adduced as an adequate justification of their overthrow. That they had attained to a bad eminence in crime, there can be no doubt. The apostle's fearful portraiture of heathenism, in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, might find its prototypes in certain insulated passages of the Old Testament referring to the Canaanites. The very soil is represented as impatient of the abominations of which it was compelled to take cognizance. The people had reached that last stage of moral corruption in which they appeared devoid of natural instincts. That brief sentence, "they caused their children to pass through the fire unto Moloch," expresses about all which the imagination can conceive both of impiety and inhumanity. It combines the essence of idolatry and ferocity.

Still this fact does not seem to remove the serious objection which is adduced against the *method* by which the Canaanites were destroyed. If the earth had become weary of those who trod upon her bosom, why did she not open her mouth and swallow them up? Men who emulated the sin of Sodom deserved her fiery end. It should seem that an immediate judgment from Heaven would in a moment rid the land of transgressors so abandoned. Still, the indirect, the mediate course was preferred. Human agents were employed as the ministers of vengeance. Hence we must seek for other grounds on which to vindicate the

justice of God. The simple wickedness of the Canaanites does not seem to authorize the mode for their destruction which was adopted.

4. It is argued by some that the children of Israel were the lawful heirs to the soil of Canaan and that in taking possession of the country, they were merely asserting their legal and indisputable rights. The Almighty had in a solemn manner and on repeated occasions promised it to the patriarchs. The Proprietor of all things had given only a lease of it, for a few generations, to the Canaanites. The time was now come when the lawful owners must take possession of the long unreclaimed inheritance. The legal rights, which had been in a kind of abeyance, must be forcibly asserted.

But there would seem to be but slight foundation for an hypothesis of this nature. The Canaanitish tribes had in very ancient times, acquired a right to the soil which was everywhere acknowledged, and by none more readily and fully than by the Hebrew patriarchs. Abraham confessed to the children of Heth that he was a mere stranger and sojourner in their country, and that he could acquire a right in the soil only by fair purchase. Accordingly, he bought a piece of land for a family burial-place. In like manner Jacob purchased a parcel of a field where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, for a hundred pieces of money. In short, the Canaanites seem to have had all that right to the country which can be acquired in any case. It had been theirs from time immemorial. They were in full possession of it before Abraham had left his Chaldean mountains. Portions of it had been bought and sold in innumerable instances. Even if their original right were defective, of which there is no evidence, long and undisputed possession would have given them an ample title.

We come now to what, in our opinion, may be considered a satisfactory vindication of the benevolence and justice of God in relation to this question. Men, or any created beings, may be innocently employed in inflicting deserved punishment on their fellow creatures. The service imposes upon them no necessity of committing sin. On the contrary, the execution of such a command, on the part of man, is perfectly consistent with the maintenance of sound moral feelings and a benevolent temper.

I. This point receives some confirmation from what appears to be implied, if not directly taught in the Scriptures, viz. that crea-

tures of a higher order than man, have been, and will be employed in executing the wrath of God on their disobedient companions and on sinners of the human race. The Scriptures contain several intimations, hints or fore-shadowings of this truth as well as direct assertions of it. Angels were employed in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Subsequently the Assyrian army fell beneath the sword of the destroying angel. In the last great day, the Son of Man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. Now God is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth he man or angel. This hard duty imposed upon the creature is not necessarily sinful. The angel might cherish vindictive feelings and he might not. He may execute these sentences of divine justice without one wrong emotion. And what is possible for him is possible for man. What may be done without sin by the one may be by the other. What would lay upon either a natural necessity to sin would not be imposed upon either. God's command to men is not graduated according to the sinfulness of the creature. It may involve a severe temptation to evil, but if there be no invincible necessity in the case, then it may be right. The prophet Samuel destroyed a prince of the Amalekites in a terrible, and what some would pronounce a shocking manner. He did it, there is every reason to suppose, in accordance with the divine will, and without committing sin in the act. On the contrary, for not doing it, Saul fell under the divine displeasure and was deprived of his kingdom and his life. Now what was practicable for Samuel and a virtuous act in his case was so for every other Israelite.

II. We should be led to infer the rightfulness of the command from the ordinary operations of divine Providence. Individual men and nations in numberless instances have been made the instruments of inflicting terrible evils on other individuals and communities. Doubtless in most of these cases they have done it in order to gratify their own selfish passions. They were unwilling instruments in the hands of God. Through them he made the wrath of other men and of other nations to praise him. An immense amount of good was accomplished, yet it was in direct contrariety to their intentions. But has it been so in every instance? Has no man or community consciously and willingly executed the commands of God? Have all, who have been the instruments of the Almighty, been forced into his service against their will? Has selfish or malignant passion been in every in-

stance the controlling motive? Were the Waldenses, when they rolled down the rocks from their Alpine fastnesses on the heads of their blood-thirsty foes, performing an act out of which and against its nature, God, in his wonder-working Providence, educes good, while these wretched wanderers were only gratifying their personal ill-will? No! Every true Protestant on the face of the earth, from that time to the present, would affirm that the deed was right in every aspect of it. So also when the people of the Low Countries rose up and burst open the Inquisition and expelled the Spaniard from the country, at the cost of rivers of blood, was it a sinful instrumentality? Were the feelings actuating these oppressed Netherlanders necessarily wrong? No! is the unanimous verdict of every impartial historian in Christendom.

But however it may be in these cases, there is one instance fully in point and where we cannot be mistaken. God commissioned Cyrus, king of Persia, to destroy Babylon and deliver his chosen people. He called him by name more than a hundred years before his birth and designated him to the work. This divine commission was made known to the Persian king either by direct revelation, or by Isaiah's prophecy, so that he acted, as he himself informs us, as the conscious and willing instrument of Jehovah. Babylon was, therefore, destroyed by him in obedience to the will of heaven, and not simply to carry out his plans of conquest. He acknowledges the authority of Jehovah and earnestly promotes the restoration of the exiles. Here then is a case precisely analogous to that of the Canaanites, and against which, so far as we know, no objection is urged. Yet the destruction of Babylon involved an amount of suffering, an indiscriminate slaughter of the innocent and guilty, which, perhaps, transcended all that was inflicted on the people of Canaan.

From this and other analogous instances, we may certainly infer that human agents may be innocently employed, and consciously so to themselves, in administering punishment on sinning nations and individuals. This would be a natural presumption from the general course of divine Providence. If the fearful tragedy enacted within the walls of Babylon was right, if the scenes which were witnessed in the vallies of Piedmont and the glens of Scotland, when those who had been hunted like sheep on the mountains, rose on their merciless foes, cannot be proved to be wrong, then the tribes of Canaan might be destroyed in consistency with the moral attributes of God.

III. The position may be fully established from the recognition of civil government in the New Testament. Rulers are ordained of God. Whoever resisteth them resisteth the ordinance of God, no matter what the form of government may be. Now the very statement of the case shows that it is their right and duty to use forcible means if necessary, in administering the government. They bear not the sword in vain. They are a terror to evil doers. But if this were not directly asserted, it would follow from the nature of the case. If a command be lawful, all those steps which are necessary in order to execute that command are lawful. The indispensable means as well as the end are sanctioned. Now it is the duty of the magistrate, made so by the word of God, to suppress an insurrection, peaceably if he can, forcibly if he must. In this popular tumult, a city or province may be involved. To suppress it may demand a great sacrifice of life both of the innocent as well as the guilty. It may be utterly impracticable to make the discrimination. Every instance of this kind has doubtless led to the destruction of persons who were not guilty. Yet the magistrate was not in fault. He could not maintain his authority and put an end to the mischief without storming a city. Is he to desist because of the hazard to the innocent women and children within its walls? Certainly not, if human government is to be maintained. The right and the duty of maintaining this, the New Testament positively affirms. Now no government has ever existed on earth for any length of time, which has not found it necessary, in the execution of its orders, to inflict suffering even unto death on the innocent as well as on the guilty. Without the power to do this, it could not exist. But if it were wrong, then the Bible has been virtually in opposition to all actual governments, or, in effect, in opposition to its own precepts. It follows that the children of Israel were not necessarily committing sin in extirpating the Canaanites, though innocent children and others not specially in fault were involved in the common doom.

IV. It may be shown, from its effects on the Israelites, that the infliction of suffering and death on one's fellow creatures does not of necessity lead to sin. It was the means of salutary moral discipline. Though painful, it produced the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

It was, doubtless, a hard task for Sir Matthew Hale to pronounce some of the sentences which he did pronounce,—as they carried extreme sorrow and wretchedness into many families. Yet who can doubt but that the judge was eminent-

ly conscientious, that his decisions were generally just, and that they contributed to his own moral improvement. There is no doubt but that General Washington assumed the command of the American army as a matter of duty. He had no love for war or military distinction. The sad scenes through which he passed did not harden his heart or enkindle any revengeful or malignant passions. His recorded sayings and his subsequent life most fully confirm this. Yet his was a fearful path. He unsheathed the sword against the native land of his ancestors. He took up arms against his own kindred. He, more than any other American, was the cause of unutterable distress to many families left without husband or father.

Not altogether dissimilar was the situation of the leader of the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan. He accepted his commission in obedience to the command of God. He and his immediate associates, performed what they considered to be an unquestionable duty. They found in their career no invincible temptations to the indulgence of malicious or cruel passions. The work was conscientiously undertaken and there is not the slightest intimation that the result was in any degree unfavorable to the character of these leaders. The contrary is perfectly obvious. A firmer trust in God, a more entire devotedness to his service, illustrate the last days of him on whom the mantle of the law-giver descended. He was thus counted worthy to stand in that illustrious company, who through faith subdued kingdoms, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Now what did not prove an incitement to sin in the leaders, could not necessarily be so to the mass of the soldiers. If the one party escaped the fiery trial, unharmed, the other might escape. That which strengthened the virtuous principle, or increased faith in God in one man, might accomplish the same in ten or one hundred individuals, acting in similar circumstances.

What now was the great moral effect which God intended to produce on the minds of the Israelites? It was evidently this,—to awaken in them the deepest abhorrence of idolatry, a detestation of the worship of false gods, an inextinguishable hatred of its untold cruelties. Now the destruction of the Canaanites by an immediate divine judgment could not have made the lesson so impressive. The Israelites might have been filled with astonishment in seeing God's wrath descending, as it did on Sodom, in a storm of fire. They might have been overwhelmed

with terror, as some of their fathers were when the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah and his company; and yet in the space of a month or a year, they might have been ripe for the same rebellion and the same end. A slower process, a more detailed exhibition of God's punitive justice was needed. Idolatry must be seen in its horrid *particulars*. No impression could be so deep as that made by personal observation. Long-continued inspection of the pagan rites must have taught lessons that could never be effaced. "Here," the invading army might say, "the Supreme God was publicly dethroned in mock solemnity; yonder in that valley, Moloch was worshipped

—besmeared with blood

Of human sacrifice and parents' tears;

on that high hill, under that lofty oak we saw abominations practised for which happily we have no name. The bestiality of Sodom infected the land. The very soil seemed to cry aloud for purification and the air itself loathed the corruption that it was compelled to sustain."¹

In such circumstances, much of the horror which commonly accompanies warlike scenes would disappear. The dreadful human sacrifices offered up by the Mexicans, greatly diminish the sympathy which we should otherwise feel for them when attacked by Cortez. Those who demolished the Bastille in Paris, and the prisons of the inquisition in Spain, were really laborers in the cause of humanity, though human life was to some extent sacrificed. The Hebrews—worshippers of one God and taught to hold idolatry in the greatest abhorrence—might regard themselves as innocent executioners of a richly deserved punishment. A virtuous indignation might have been the predominant feeling in their breasts. Every sentiment of compassion towards the Canaanites must have been shocked, if not wholly paralyzed, by the cruel and obscene rites, the proofs or the actual performance of which, they were often compelled to witness. They were not dealing with personal foes, nor gratifying private malice. They were the appointed ministers of Him whose pe-

¹ The moral corruption of the descendants of some of the Canaanitish tribes that were spared, e. g. the Carthaginians, was proverbial throughout the pagan world. Increasing refinement had almost annihilated among other nations the cruel practice of offering human sacrifices, but nothing could prevail upon the Carthaginians to abandon it, though thereby they became an abhorrence to all civilized men. The licentiousness of the Syrians was equally proverbial with their cruelty. See Hengstenberg Beiträge II. 506.

cular glory the people of Canaan were foully desecrating. The invading army were under no more necessity of indulging in personal ill-will or cruelty than the individual judge or magistrate of the present day when called to pronounce or execute the sentences of the law. If the temptation to sin were greater in the former case, so would the rewards of successfully resisting it be correspondingly greater. That the temptation in question was resisted, we have incontrovertible evidence from the history. The age of Joshua was the golden age of the Jewish people in respect to true piety or obedience to the laws of God. In confirmation of this, we might advert to the circumstances and happy settlement of the difficulty which occurred between the warriors of the two tribes and the half tribe whose abode was on the east of the Jordan and their brethren who lived west of the river. Both parties were actuated by fraternal feelings and by a high regard for the true religion. So in Judges 2: 7, there is the following decisive testimony: "And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel." This passage proves that the people came out of the war true and zealous worshippers of Jehovah, and it also indicates the manner in which they maintained their integrity and derived moral benefit from the scenes through which they had passed. It was a holy war which they had waged. They were the soldiers of the Lord of hosts. They had taken up arms not so much against human life, or a public enemy, as against a most revolting form of polytheism. They boasted not as if their own arm had gotten them the victory. It was "the great works of the Lord" that had secured the triumph. The stars in their courses fought for Israel. For them the sun had stood still on Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. To their Almighty Deliverer, they felt disposed to raise, at the close of the strife, the grateful song of thanksgiving.