

a clear perception of the source of Samuel's power. According to the oldest narrative Samuel never put himself in opposition to the selection of Saul as King. It was not by the demand of the people, as told in chap. viii, but at the command of Jehovah, that he anointed Saul to be prince over Israel (ix., 16); not because the people lacked confidence in Samuel's sons (viii., 5), but because the Lord would save his people from the tyranny of the Philistines (ix., 16.) Samuel does not demur doing this, as the priestly writer tells us (viii., 6, 9), but he joyfully greets Saul, invites him to a feast, and calls to it distinguished guests that may aid in exalting the name of the future king (ix., 22-24.) All the processes of Saul's elevation are by Samuel's willing consent, because as a "seer" he has read the mind of Jehovah, and desires faithfully to carry out Jehovah's will. This is the oldest history of Samuel, and this is the Samuel whose career we shall follow, the man who feared no human authority and deferred to no clamor of the people.

We must not, however, take Samuel out of his environment nor divest him of his natural character. Bible history gains no sacredness by projecting it into the present age. It must be in its own ancient setting to be understood and to be essentially valuable. Samuel, "the man of God" in his own time, would be an inhuman monster in the present age. The ascent from Samuel to Jesus is paralleled only by the ascent from his Jehovah to our Father in Heaven. Bearing this in mind, we shall not be shocked at Samuel's ferocity as narrated in xv., 33, where he "hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." The custom of laying a whole people "under the ban," that is, of sacrificing everything that belonged to a conquered nation—men, women, children, flocks, and all earthly possessions, had been inherited by Samuel

from bloodthirsty ancestors, and in making up our estimate of Samuel's character we must take this into the account.

OBEEDIENCE is the cardinal principle in Samuel's character; it was the cardinal virtue of the age. In a military age, among a people struggling for independence, we may expect this to be so. Not to question the reason for a command, not to exercise a particle of one's own discretion, but to give prompt, implicit obedience to the word of the leader is a prime necessity in times of war. And we must remember that in these times Jehovah was the supposed leader of Israel's army, Samuel was the mouth-piece of Jehovah, and Saul was the appointee of Samuel. However imperious and autocratic Saul might be in the military government of his people, not one step could the army move, not a plan of campaign be made, not even the pursuit of a conquered enemy undertaken, till Jehovah had been consulted and his favorable reply received. But Saul was rash, and did not always give that implicit obedience to the advice of Samuel which he himself demanded from those under his authority. The sparing of Agag, King of the Amalekites, and the chosen cattle from the universal slaughter, as narrated in 1st Sam., xv., was an instance of Saul's temerity. But in chap. xiii. we have a greater illustration of the character of Samuel's demand for obedience. This is from the pen of the oldest writer. In substance it is as follows: Saul, according to Samuel's directions, had chosen an army of three thousand men, and had encamped according to his instructions at Gilgal, a fortress not far distant from Jerusalem. Here by Samuel's directions (see x., 8), he was to wait seven days, until Samuel would come and offer sacrifices, and show him what to do. Saul kept the agreement, and waited seven days, though meanwhile the Philistines had assembled in such immense numbers and with such a formidable show of