

idolatry, which was a crime as well as a sin in Judah. But while the purpose of the historian is to recount his conduct as a king, his character as a man is described as well, for personal views moulded his royal acts. He ruled well because he lived aright. He sincerely sought to please God.

His life was far from perfect. When Baasha built Ramah as a watchtower over against Jerusalem, Asa bribed Benhadad with the treasures of the temple to attack Baasha, rousing thus in Syria a cupidity which only conquest could glut; and when disease attacked him, he had recourse, not to God and healing but to physicians with charms and magic. Yet, we are told, his heart was perfect all his days; that is, through many failures his guiding purpose continued to be the doing of God's will.

Compare his conduct with that of the previous kings. Both Rehoboam and Abijah when in straits called upon God. Rehoboam humbled himself, and said the Lord is righteous. Abijah addressed Jeroboam in words having the ring almost of prophetic fire. Yet these occasions were exceptions and not the general stamp of their conduct. Rehoboam 'forsook the law of the Lord and all Israel with him . . . His heart was not perfect.' Abijah 'walked in the sins of his father . . . He prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.' They sought to serve two masters; Asa sought first the kingdom of God.

**Altars of the strange god's;** of all god's beside Jehovah. 'Altars dedicated to foreign gods' scarcely gives the idea. There is a special reference always in the words. "Strangers" were persons of foreign origin dwelling in the land of Israel, remnants of the old Canaanites, fugitives, captives, servants, and merchants. Strange gods were the gods of these residents but worshipped by Israel as well.

**High places.**—Generally natural hills, but sometimes artificial mounds, crowned by altars with or without tabernacles, often with trees around them.

Two distinct earlier customs appear merged in their later use. 1. Worship of God upon commanding sites. 2. Worship of deified heroes at their burial mounds. The first, "as innocent as it was natural" was patriarchal, but in it the sites were in no sense sacred.

The latter was as persistent and as universal as polytheism. The Mosaic law forbade the use of all such places even in the worship of Jehovah. The command was never strictly complied with.

The custom still exists. Thompson, in "The Land and the Book" says "Every conspicuous hill top has a *wely* or *mazar* beneath a spreading oak, to which people pay religious visits, and to discharge vows. All sects in the country without exception have a predilection for these "high places," strong as that of the Jews in ancient times. The customs are identical.

Many of the *mazars*, whose history no one knows, have probably come down from remote antiquity through all mutations of dynasties and religions, unchanged to the present hour. They are now frequented by the oldest communities in the country and those the most opposed to each other. For example, Neby Seijud, crowning the southern peak of Lebanon, is resorted to by Jews, wild Arabs of the desert, Moslems, Metawelies, and Christians. We have therefore in them, not only sites of the highest antiquity, but monuments of man's most ancient superstitions."

**Images.**—Not the same word as in v. s. 5. Here it means, "a standing image," a pillar, altar, an erected stone, anything set up as a centre for religious gatherings. It applies equally to a monolithic altar or a Jehovistic golden calf.

**'Croves.'**—A mis-translation. The word means an image of some sort, for it could be set up in the temple, placed on an altar, surrounded by hangings, ground to powder. "These "Asherim" are identified by some with the Assyrian symbol of the host of heaven, but were more probably figures of a Syrian goddess corresponding to Venus and connected with a gross nature worship. This worship, licentious and impure to the last degree, still survives among the Anseirlyeh pagans of Mount Lebanon.

**Images.**—Sun-images, probably of a conical form, and gilt. The sun had horses consecrated to him, 2 Ki. 23:11, and was worshipped with the face towards the east. Ezek. 8: 16. This worship of the sun, stars, and planets, was the Arab religion before Islam, and is still found among some tribes.

**T. do the law and the command-**