

divine revelation. (See vs. 1-12.)

I. Saul's Disobedience, 13, 14.

Vs. 13, 14. *Saul said. . . Blessed be thou.* The king greeted the aged prophet with a hearty salutation, as if all were right. *I have performed*, etc. Yes, in a sense he had; he had ravaged the Amalekite country from northeast to southwest, v. 7. *What meaneth . . . this bleating . . . lowing . . . I hear?* In the first enthusiasm of victory Saul was perhaps unconscious of wrong-doing. But his disobedience was immediately brought home to him. The bleating of the sheep and lowing of the oxen—the only kind of property the Amalekites had—witnessed against him.

II. Saul's Excuses, 15-21.

V. 15. *They have brought . . . the people spared.* Saul betakes himself to the refuge of a coward, shouldering the blame of his disobedience upon others. In putting forward this excuse he proclaimed himself, not the leader, but the servant and instrument of his soldiers. *The best . . . to sacrifice.* An attempt to cover his fault with the semblance of a religious purpose, as if such hypocrisy could deceive either Samuel or God. *The Lord thy God.* But He was Saul's God as well as Samuel's, and had the king remembered this, he would have been saved from his disobedience. *The rest . . . destroyed.* Partial obedience is really disobedience, James 2 : 10.

Vs. 16-19. *Stay. No more excuses! Little in thine own sight.* There was a time when Saul was modest and self-distrustful, chs. 9 : 21 ; 10 : 22. *Made the head . . . of Israel.* He had been made king by Jehovah, and he ought, therefore, to have obeyed God himself, and enforced a like obedience on his followers. *The Lord sent thee*, etc. When he was charged to root out Amalek, he was bound to obey, and not *fly upon the spoil*. Samuel implies that to spare the cattle was an act of pure greed. The Amalekites are called *sinners* because they are enemies of the holy people Israel. The Assyrian kings speak of their enemies as "sinners".

V. 21. *Yea, I have obeyed . . . brought Agag . . . spoil . . . to sacrifice.* Saul persists in justifying himself. He insists he has fulfilled the charge given to him. But he must have known that what was under the ban had to be killed at once, and could not be reserved for

burnt-offerings, Lev. 27 : 29. Let it not seem praiseworthy to reserve something for sacrifice; to the mind of Samuel true sacrifice, where there was a disobedient heart, was a religious impossibility.

III. Saul's Sentence, 22-28.

Vs. 22, 23. Then comes the word spoken to the prophet in the night season, v. 16. Like many another oracle, it is in poetical form :

"Doth Jehovah delight in offerings and sacrifices

As in obedience to the voice of Jehovah?
Behold obedience is better than sacrifice,
And to hearken than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is the sin of soothsaying,
Obstinacy is the iniquity of teraphim.

Because thou hast rejected the word of
Jehovah,

He hath rejected thee from ruling over
Israel."

The mark of Hebrew poetry is evident, the parallelism between the lines of the couplets. *To obey is better than sacrifice*; a principle as to worship reiterated by prophet after prophet of the Old Testament (Isa. 1 : 10-17 ; Amos 5 : 21-24 ; Mic. 6 : 6-8), and confirmed by Jesus Himself in the New, Matt. 9 : 13 ; 12 : 7. *Rebellion* is on the same plane with *witchcraft*, and *stubbornness* with *idolatry*. Witchcraft (including "enchantment" and "divination") and idolatry were looked upon as the grossest iniquities, never to be tolerated in Israel (Deut. 18 : 10), and were branded as heathenish, Ezek. 21 : 21. Last of all is the crushing word, "rejected" : *The Lord . . . hath . . . rejected thee from being king.* Saul is joined to his idols (Hos. 4 : 17), and must be let alone.

Vs. 24-26. *I have sinned . . . pardon my sin . . . turn again with me . . . worship.* Saul's discomforture is complete. He confesses that he has yielded to the people, and he entreats Samuel to take part with him in the sacrifice he has to offer to God. *I will not . . . thou hast rejected . . . the Lord hath rejected.* Samuel refuses at first (but see v. 31), and reiterates the oracle of rejection.

Vs. 27, 28. *Laid hold upon the skirt . . . mantle . . . rent.* Samuel turns to depart, but Saul seizes him by the robe, imploring him to stay. But the lappet that the king lays hold of