

moreover, points to the identity, as a comparison of the records show. The only objection is sentimental, and that would exclude what most undoubtedly must remain, Tamar (ver. 3), whose record is found in Gen. xxxviii.

Attempts have been made, ingeniously, to give a softer meaning to the word harlot, out of regard to Rahab's character, than that which it generally bears. Thus Jewish writers as well as Christian. Josephus in his "Antiquities," indicates the less harsh meaning of hostess, one who keeps a public house. It is, however, now pretty well conceded that the ordinary meaning must be retained, and that we are to take facts as they are with the spirit of the Bible records themselves, which give things not as we would have them, but as they actually are—the only safe course in the end.

There is not very much reliable history regarding the Canaanite nations of Joshua's time; there are, however, sufficient allusions, in Scripture and elsewhere, to form some conception of their state religiously and morally. Of the heathen world, when left to itself, little can be said that will flatter human pride; much that ought to humble and raise the cry, "Lord, save, or we perish." The worship of the Canaanitish nations was a worship of nature in its most disgusting forms. It must be sufficient from this place to say that harlotry was, under certain licensed forms, made a part of the national religion. Deut. xxiii. 17, 18, is, without question, directed not so much against Israelitish as Canaanite practices and authorized customs. The apparently cruel command regarding Jericho, Joshua vi. 17, etc., may find some explanation in the terrible moral depravity of the people, which we know in some instances appears so thoroughly hopeless as to render its presence a pest-house where compassion is lost, and where, fearful as is the alternative, the only hope for the living is to "stamp out" the plague. Sodom and Gomorrah had not perished had ten righteous men been found therein, and Lot was rescued from the fall. Jericho would appear to have been a Sodom. Gen. xv. 16 hints at a filling up of iniquity's cup on the part of some at least of the Canaanitish tribes. These considerations should not be lost sight of in our estimate of Rahab's character, and her subsequent reception into Israel (Joshua vi. 25: "She dwelleth in Israel *unto this day.*") Note the italicised

words as indicating the contemporary character of the record). Rahab was not below the moral standard of her city and people, and that is about as much as can justly be said of very much of our present day religious respectability. Like to the woman at Samaria's well; the conditions of her life were not such as to encourage virtue and true morality.

Now let us form an estimate of her character in so far as it rose superior to her surroundings, and thus separate her from the remaining inhabitants of Jericho.

The account of her reception of the spies, contrasted with that of the King of Jericho, will afford the data (Josh. ii. 1-24). The King of Jericho (as the people that in after days crucified Messiah) could not gainsay that the Lord God was with Israel (ver. 10); but while he resolved to put out of the way the unwelcome message, or at least the messengers, Rahab owned the truth, became true to her convictions, and sought safety not only for herself, but for her kindred.

Her home thus became a "refuge," for all in the house across whose window the scarlet thread was drawn were assured of safety, and "whosoever shall go out of the house into the street, his blood shall be upon his own head." Rahab preached salvation in Jericho; they who "would not" perished, even then as now.

Briefly let Rahab's history be reviewed: a heathen, with the most debased heathen surroundings, taught religiously to prostitute for common use that which Christianity has taught woman to esteem as above all price, and which, even among the heathen themselves, though the shadow of the temple was supposed to cast a hallowed gloom over its profanation, was not lightly esteemed where truly possessed. We can conceive of no more unfavourable circumstances under which to nourish the grace of that faith which is the assurance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen. Rumours come of a people led by a God whose wonder-working arm had struck terror even into the proud palace of the Egyptian Pharaoh, and who now had led that people, disciplined, strengthened, to the very waters of her own country. Two of that favoured people enter her home, doubtlessly relate to her some of the wondrous story of Jehovah's care and power. She receives them in peace; their words, with the rumours already heard, decide her; for herself and