

26
13

Dedicated,
In love and gratitude,
To
God's ministering angels on earth—
Dr. Samuel Wolfenstein,
Supt. Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum
and
My Own Dear Mother
Dora Keen
My dearest Friends & Benefactors.

Nov. 10/78

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Preface.

The author of this thesis claims no further merit than that of having collected and classified, to some extent, the various views that are current as to the nature & purpose of the Book of Esther.

While heretofore each critic has dealt with the question only from his personal point of view, as a result of which each one's estimate of the book was often partially that of another critic & partly, owing to the particular author's bent of mind, a distinct thing, it has, it may be more truthfully said, been my endeavor to reproduce the various objections & criticisms, by mentioning the most annoying & incisive strokes that have been made to dissect our book & by a proper analysis of which, it was attempted to re-join the dissected component parts. In this way the pros & cons in favor of the canonical value of the book, its historical character, etc. have been considered. In all this work the writer has not presumed to side with any of the contending

theorists, feeling himself in no sense qualified to express an independent view. He has endeavored to present without prejudice - without partiality all the conflicting opinions. His aim has not been to show the ^{greater} ~~more~~ acceptability of one view than of another. In this objective way, he has intended, & he hopes he has succeeded, to present the contents of what follows.

Secondly, as a senior, who by College requirements had to submit a thesis proving that he has familiarized himself with a Jewish subject, he undertakes, on the advice & suggestion of Dr. Louis Ginzman, decided to make a study of the Book of Esther.

The following pages, written during a year of busy College & University life, are submitted as evidence of a somewhat careful investigation as to the standing of the Book of Esther both in centuries past & in our day. I may say in apology for the very imperfect character of the report herein contained, that I decided upon this subject only in the middle of last December, & so had

of which I have been enabled to devote only about half of the time usually allowed & spent by students & the preparation of their first ^{pretensions} work along scientific & critical lines.

In conclusion, I wish to express my sincerest thanks to Dr. Louis Grossman & particularly for the subject herein treated, suggested by him, and for the valuable assistance he lent me in the way of advice & the use of books; my gratitude is due also Dr. Deutsch & Dr.

Philpott, who kindly consented & proposed to give me free access to their libraries for any materials bearing on the subject in hand, which their rich collection of books might afford. I wish moreover, to express my great indebtedness to Dr. M. Nuss & the Faculty as a whole, whose instruction & painstaking zeal have made it possible for me to undertake & complete a work of this character & these proportions.

Israel Klein.

April 1, 1894

Table of Contents.

	Pages.	
Chap I	1-8	Introduction.
Chap II	9-17	Contents of Esther.
Chap III	18-31	Historical Characters Suggested as Prototypes of Ahasuerus or Identical with him.
Chap IV	32-38	Are Esther, Mordechai & Haman Pseudonyms?
Chap V	39-51	Is the Book of Esther Unadulterated History?
Chap VI	52-63	Date & Place of Composition of Esther: The Author.
Chap VII	64-74	The Religious Character of the Book of Esther.
Chap VIII	75-81	Disputed Canonicity of the Book.
Chap IX	82-86	Purpose of the Book of Esther.
Chap X	87-100	Purim & Its Origin.

The Book of Esther.

Graduation Thesis
of

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Hebrew Union College.

Cin. O.

Apr. 1/99.

Introduction.

The Scholarship of the day has cast aside all unreasonable reverence for what by-gone ages held sacred & unquestionable. It has claimed the right to examine the records of the past and reset their value in the light of latter-day knowledge & learning.

Thus the Book of Esther has come under the critical inspection of the Skeptical & readjusting Bible critic and he has presumed to doubt the genuineness & historical character of the contents of the most prized of all the Megilloth. He would reject, in a piece, the work as being nothing more than a national romance, though among our forefathers this Providence-breathing book was ranked next to the unapproachable Pentateuch in value. The thorough-going critic sees no account of fact whatever, but simply a

2

Judaized synthesis of a number of nature myths and festivals blended so as to be acceptable & meaningful to the Jewish people, who should not be able to recognize the heathen origin of the component elements, which has been cunningly fused is that it has become a difficult task for even the all-knowing nineteenth century critic to unravel the entangled skein of the story. But even the most arrogant critic has been forced reluctantly to confess that he has failed to discover a satisfactory & complete chre.

The more conservative & less daring critics, in endeavoring to deny the gullibility of men of old and in attempting to maintain & justify our regard for the Book of Esther, have admitted the improbability if not the impossibility of some of the reports contained in Esther. They would concede e.g. that the Jews did not

3

heartlessly massacre 7000 Persian subjects & that the edict of wicked Haman was not so far-reaching in its evil effectiveness as the one-ided author of the book would have us believe. They would thus soften down the severities and diminish the scope of the devilish decree, hoping by the former concession to exonerate those who had received the book of Esther into the cause as a divinely inspired book; by the latter confession, they seek to defend the historical character of Esther. The simple fact that we find nowhere else mention of such a threatened & unheard-of extermination under any of the Persian monarchs militates strongly against the view of this class of exponents.

The feast of Purim too forms another stumbling-block in the way of this cotr-ell. In despite their scholarly philological researches and ingenious suggestions, they have ^{not} found in the Persian tongue, either old

4

or new, a synonym for the Hebrew word ^{לֶחֶם} that could be shown to be the original of the word ^{לֶחֶם} (lot) which the author of Esther would have us believe is the Persian equivalent of ^{לֶחֶם}, by which he explains it.

And lastly, the view of the orthodox who clings unquestioningly & tenaciously to what even men in the past considered sacred.

The mere fact that the Book of Esther was once accepted as written by an inspired servant of God, forbids and brands as deserving of perpetual condemnation any honest attempt to probe independently into the body of this literary subject to examine ^{of what} consistence its ^{component} tissues are. He warns all truth-seekers lest they sin in analyzing what so many generations have believed came to earth thoroughly fused & fully formed. He would have us behold Adam as a completed, full-grown & perfect being instead of examining the vital ingredi-

5
ents that have conspired to constitute him
as he is. To the last class, nothing can
be so repugnant & seem so painful as to
dare to lay violent hands on what tradi-
tion and the Bible have declared faultless.

Their heart-rending cry at seeing that
their treasure is being smelted that the
true metal may be extracted from the base
ore of myth, fancy & sanctified fraud,
pierces the clouds and is thundered into the
Ears of heedless men; "Procul, o procul
este profani". In vain they pull their
hair and despairingly beat their breast at
the thought of their loss and the stubborn,
persistent desecration of things holy by
presumptuous and doubting Thomases.

The last class is composed of the stand-
still, who venerate what is moldy
and well-worn, simply because it is old.
In their mad, deluded advocacy of the truth
& their painstaking efforts to hold men to their

6

duty to things holy, they blindly hinder the triumph of the real truth, which our more advanced age can the better furnish us. They deny the superiority of our age, openly avowed ^{more} (less) frequently than in their hearts, but nevertheless, their attitude is hostile to the objectively true & thus science & criticism are terrifying bog-beasts to them.

These three classes ^{of scholars} are representative of various classes of men. As long as human minds will do their work so long will differences of opinion exist. There be those who, clinging with a life-and-death grasp to the views of centuries past, declare that Esoterica, as a whole, must be accepted as authentic without demurrer. The second set who are too much in sympathy with modern science & research to refuse it recognition & who are not so servilely conservative as

class
 the foregoing (~~fact~~) of critics, still insist
 that the book cannot be deemed as a fabri-
 cation, pure & simple, but, despite what-
 ever additions were made under pressure of
 a certain tendency, there must be some
 nucleus of historical fact at the founda-
 tion of the narrative for no sane man
 would, with impunity, have manufactured
 & proclaimed as genuine a book, & which
 he refers to a well-known monarch, who
 can be easily recognized from the limits set
 to his almost boundless dominions. (I')

Implied ignorance of court require-
 ments has led the radical critics
 to doubt the veracity of the reporter.

e.g. Esther, a captive, Jewish maiden
 becomes Queen, though it was not allow-
 able for Xerxes, who is generally identi-
 fied with Ahasuerus of Esther, to marry
 any one unless she be a daughter

of one of six Royal families in the Empire. (Herod. III. 84)

8

The battle ^{of these views} for supremacy is still in progress.

It seems probable that the wholesale acceptance of the book is certainly to be won in the fight for recognition. The ultra-radical critics, to a man, freely confess that their solution is ^{as yet} ~~not~~ open to considerable objection, especially because it fails to explain all the details of Esther. But they feel satisfied with their partial success and are encouraged, hoping ere long to have traced the points, so far left unexplained, to their original source. Thus far the middle-ground defenders seem to have a whit the better of the argument, though their defences are not what they might be to guarantee perfect security. Which ever view may in time win the victory, it remains certain that the truth will prevail in this struggle for supremacy as in all else.

Contents.

Chap. I.

In the 3rd year of his reign, King Akas-
 neros, who ruled from India to Egypt, in
 all one hundred & twenty seven provinces—
 gave a banquet lasting 10 days to all his ad-
 visers and officers. The feast was celebrated in
 the capital-city Susa, and was followed by
 a seven days' celebration given to all the residents
 of Susa; the Queen, on her part, giving a
 special feast of the same duration for the
 women of Shushan. Kingly wine flowed in streams
 & all could drink to their hearts' content. The costly
 decorations and furniture of the festive Court were
 magnificent and many-colored; the golden
 drinking cups, all of different design & of im-
 mense value, impressed the rabble with
 the grandeur of Court life and the riches of the
 King. On the seventh day of this feast, the
 besotted King, wishing to substantiate his boast
 of having the most beautiful woman in the land as

his spouse, sends for Vashti to appear before her Revelling Lord & his courtiers. She refuses and it is decided to depose her, lest her example of insubordination toward her Lord, might be imitated ^{by all women in the Empire} and create contention & grief in the households of all subjects. Thus every man's right to rule under his roof was to be re-asserted & emphasized.

Chap. II.

The ^{court} attendants, seeing the indisposition & remorse of the King as a result of his rash dethronement of Vashti, advise the King to have the most beautiful virgins of his extensive boundaries gathered in Susa, that he might select one of them to fill the vacancy caused in the King's household & affection by the dismissal of the Queen.

Mordichai, a Jew, who had ^{adopted} his orphan Cousin, was a resident of Shuslan. He

or II^o
 "Esther was brought" - brings Esther to the palace; she finds favor with leaving it don't. all through her rare beauty. Hegai, the King's ^{one whether the King's} servant, or Mordichai ^{kept E. to the palace.} Keeper-of-women befriends & favors Esther & hastens

11
Esther's preparations, which, according to rule, lasted a year. Esther's turn having arrived, she is introduced to the King, wins his love and is crowned Queen in Vashti's stead. A bedding-supper is served. But all this while, Esther's nationality, religion or family connections remain concealed.

At that time Mordechai overhears a conspiracy against the King's life; he reports it through Esther and his patriotic services are inscribed in the royal chronicles.

Chap. 3.

All subjects bow down before Haman, who occupies the highest position in the Empire, after that of the King. This is done in obedience to a royal decree. The Jew Mordechai, alone, refuses this courtesy. Haman dares not punish Mordechai alone, (who he has learned is a Jew), for this breach of laws & etiquette and he determines to exterminate, with the King's easily obtained permission, the whole accursed people, "who do not obey the King's laws."

III⁷

715'5'57 The im-
(personal construc-
tion makes my
interpretation pos-
sible. Though it
may be contended
that he himself
threw the dice.

The astrologers cast lots and the 13th of Adar is
to be the fatal day for Israel. The edict is pub-
lished in all the languages of the peoples of the Empire,
and sealed copies are sent to all sections of the
Country, calling upon all the citizens to fall
upon the Jews on the 13th of Adar, without re-
gard to sex or age, and ~~to~~ seize all their
property. While Shushan is distressed, the King & Haman make money.

Chap. 4.

Mordechai, having heard of this terrible decree, dons
sackcloth and ashes and crying bitterly comes before
the palace. Esther, informed of this peculiar conduct,
sends Mordechai a change of garments, which he
refuses, informing the Queen of the devilish de-
cree just issued against her people. He
Entreats her to intercede in her people's behalf;
she refuses, but Mordechai prevails upon her
by assuring her that she will not escape
death though palace walls shield her, and he
suggests that possibly it was for her possible
assistance in this dire emergency that she had

13
gained Ahasuerus's favor. Though her life would be jeopardized by appearing uncalled & unannounced before her lord, she promises to risk all in her co-religionists' interests.

Chap. V.

Esther, on the 3rd day, appears before the King, is graciously received, and being asked what her wish is, she invites the King & Haman to dine with her on that day. Here the King puts the same question to Esther, who, the second time, invites her guests to a similar spread on the next day. Haman leaves the first banquet elated at the distinction he had been shown in being the only guest outside of the King. But homeward-bound, he stumbles over Mordechai, who repeats his plight, and as a result Haman, in advice of his followers & his wife, determines to rid himself of his troublesome foe - Mordechai - for which purpose he selects a high gallows on his private premises.

Chap. 6.

The King cannot sleep and orders the state records to be read to him. The valuable service of Mordechai is found to be still unrewarded. The King inquires who is in the vestibule. Haman, who had risen early to gain the King's consent to the death of Mordechai, is ushered into the King's presence and at once the King asks what honor should be paid to a special benefactor of the King. Haman suggests that he be clad in royal apparel and be led through the streets of the city on the royal chariot, preceded by a crier announcing "Thus shall be done to the man whom the King delights to honor." Mordechai, he is told, is this special friend of the King & Haman is commanded to perform this service in person to Mordechai. Thus done, Haman returns home, crest fallen at his humiliation and the victory of his intended victim - Mordechai.

Chap. VII

The King & Haman attend the 2nd feast. The Queen is again asked to make her request. She pleads that her life & the life of her people be spared, ^{for} that she

15
+ her people are doomed to destruction and the King, though
losing so many subjects, is not to be satisfactorily
reimbursed for this great loss. The King is en-
raged, and being told that Haman his guest was at
the bottom of the plot, he rises, in his wrath,
from the table and Haman is condemned to die,
being hanged on the very gallows he had selected
for Mordechai.

Chap. VIII

Mordechai, whose relationship ^{to Esther} has been ~~told~~ to the
King, succeeds Haman as grand vizier &
superintends Haman's estate in the Queen's be-
half. The Queen is affected at the thought of
the destruction awaiting her people and she im-
plores the King to rescind Haman's edict; this
being impossible, as no royal order could be re-
called, a counter-decree is circulated, per-
mitting the Jews to arm & defend themselves
against their enemies, should they arise against
them on the 13th of Adar. Many of the populace
become Jews because of dread of Israel's arms.

Chap. IX.

The Jews gather in bands in all sections of the Country on the 13th of Adar. "No one could stand up against them, for the fear of them had seized all the peoples."

The Jews slay 75000 Persian subjects, of these 500 were residents of Shushan. Besides the 10 sons of Haman were killed. But the Jews did not lay their hand on the spoils. Queen Esther's request for one more day's hostilities is granted to the Jewish pettlers in Susa and they diminished, by the sword, Ahasuerus's non-Jewish subjects by 300.

The Jews outside of Susa, celebrated with light & joy the 14th of Adar, while the Jewish population of the capital observed the 15th in a similar way. ~~Haman~~ sends an ac. Cf. IX^{20ff.}

Count of these events to all Jews far & near, urging them to observe the 14th & 15th of Adar as festive days and on them to send presents to the poor, and the Jews agree so to do. A second command, signed both by Esther & Mordechai, ad-

monishes the Jews to celebrate yearly the feast of Purim, commemorative of their miraculous escape.

Chaptr. X.

Ahasuerus levies a tax on the land & the islands of the [mediterranean] sea. The closing verses tell of the glory and achievements of Ahasuerus and praise the efforts of Mordechai in behalf of his brethren and his consequent favor among them.

Ahasuerus.

It is certainly of prime importance to fix, in so far as possible, the identity of the King, during whose long reign the events recorded in our book did actually or supposedly occur. As aids & guides, we have only a few indirect & implied qualities stated, from which, together with the expressly named boundaries of his Empire, we must conclude as to the name & title in profane history of the ruler called Ahasuerus by our author.

From the course of the Biblical narrative we learn that Ahasuerus was ~~an~~ indolent, voluptuous, cruel, capricious, and as is always the case among Oriental monarchs, lewd. Besides this we have the only additional fact that his realm was bounded by India & Egypt and that it was subdivided into 127 provinces, ruled over by appointees of the King. The only remaining information furnished us is the fauquet given to his officers

¹ Hieronymus calls him Asererus.

& advisers in the 3rd year of his rule. As
 profane history makes no mention of the contem-
 plated annihilation of Israel, either in a particular
 portion of or throughout the Persian Empire,
 and no reference is made to a King called Ahas-
 uerosh, we are at sea, except for the unreliable &
 scanty hints dropped implicitly in Esther, as to
 the real name of Ahasuerosh. All this, of
 course, on the assumption that the book of Es-
 ther is unadulterated history, or history colored
 with a purpose, but still true to fact. If
 the abettor of Haman in his projected massa-
 cre and the final savior of Israel be only
 a ~~too~~ name, then, of course, all study
 and all ingenuity will prove fruitless as
 an imaginary person cannot well be identi-
 cal with a real being. As to the peculiar
 title of Ahasuerosh many diverse views
 have been advanced, all of which can, to a
 greater or less degree, be shown to have some-
 thing in common with Ahasuerosh & so
 be in their respective favor.

- (11) Cassel² identifies the King of Esther with Xerxes, for the Greeks pronounced $\chi\epsilon\rho\sigma\epsilon\varsigma$ or $\chi\epsilon\rho\sigma\epsilon\varsigma$ Kyax-ares or Xerxes. $\chi\epsilon\rho\sigma\epsilon\varsigma$ Cassel derives from $\chi\epsilon\rho$ (first) + $\sigma\epsilon\varsigma$ (King) which he says is equal to Khsha or Kyax + $\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon\epsilon$ which was shortened & read Xerxes. So him it seems the banquet given, as stated in Esther, in Ahasuerus's 3rd year, may well correspond to the great feast Xerxes is known to have given to his subordinates after his conquest of Egypt & before collecting his forces for his invasion of Greece that resulted so disastrously.²
- Why then didn't the author of Esther make reference to the intended invasion of Greece or to the catastrophe? As to the first, because it did not bear directly on his subject & as to the second because of the King's ill-luck in his expedition.

¹ Cf. Herod. 6⁹⁸ Xerxes = a warrior. ² Cf. Herod. 7⁸

² The best scholars claim that the Greek Xerxes is but a Grecized form of the Persian name *Khshayarsha*, which
thetic & becomes the Hebrew $\chi\epsilon\rho\sigma\epsilon\varsigma$

Cassel finds support for his view in the fact that the feast spoken of in Esther Chap. I took place in the 3rd year of Ahasuerus and Esther becomes the royal spouse in the 10th month of his 7th year; thus 4 years would be left open, during which time we know Xerxes was in Greece. Thus the author of Esther was exact in his statements and is in accord with history facts. But it seems to me that Cassel overlooks the fact that one year had to be passed by Esther preparatory to being presented to the King. Besides Cf. 2⁸, Esther comes to the palace only after there had previously arrived a great many damisels. Thirdly, some time must be supposed to have elapsed ere the call for virgins could be published. These facts considered, 4 years could not have been passed by Ahasuerus in Greece, ^{to our author's knowledge} else Esther could not have become queen in his 7th year. Looking at the second Chapter verse 1, we are led to suppose ^{that} but a short time ^{would} have passed before

according to Herod. 720 Xerxes spent 4 whole years in making preparations to invade Europe.

22

the King realized his injustice toward Vashti. It certainly did not occupy the short space of 3 or 4 whole years to repent of his evil. Cassel finds support for his view by supposing that the King's defeat in Greece made him feel the more keenly the loss of his beloved queen and that he indulged his sensual appetites to drive away all cares & forget his disappointment. That his concerned courtiers advised such means to divert his thoughts is possible, but it seems most unlikely that Ahasuerus did not at once replace the deposed Vashti by another of his numerous concubines.

- (2) From Herod. 3⁸⁹ we learn that Darius was the first to divide his Empire into provinces or satrapies, composed often of different nations, hence giving rise to the districts (סלטר) of Esther. We learn here also that Darius was the first to impose ^{definite} tributes upon subjugated lands. Cf. Esther 10¹ & 2¹⁸. This will refute the opinion of those who would identify Ahasuerus with Cam-

byses. To this reputation may be added the further fact that Darius, ^{Hystaspis} made Susa the royal residence. Hence Cambyses could not have been the King who gave the baugnet mentioned in Esther I. Nor did Cambyses; nor even Darius's territories extend from India to Ethiopia for it was left as a part of Xerxes's inheritance to subdue the indomitable Egyptians, who include the people of וְיָד .

There is much in the character of Xerxes as we know it from Herodotus that corresponds closely to the Ahasuerus of Esther.

As to the extent of Xerxes's lands, we read: "If we reduce these [the Athenians] & their neighbors who inhabit the country of Pelops the Phrygian, to our power, the Persian Empire will be limited by heaven alone:" (Herod. 7⁹).

We know that he believed in astrology (Herod. 7¹⁹); ^{VII³⁷} its professors, the book of Esther says, Haman consulted, which would be an easy matter for him, the "alter ego" of Xerxes.
 1. Esther III

It is in keeping with the character of a monarch who would cast fetters into the sea and lashed the Hellespont because a storm had destroyed a bridge (Herod. 7³⁴) he had stretched across it, to consent to the heartless butchery of a whole defenceless & unoffending people simply to gratify a favorite.

Xerxes would be just the man to have given ^{pumpitious} the feast described so ^{minutely} ~~pumpitious~~ in the opening chapter of Esther. Having succeeded in subjugating the Egyptians, which Cambyses and Darius had failed to do, and now pretuning to himself a future but certain conquest of the Greeks that would make him undisputed ruler of the known world, he could well afford to furnish the costliest of wine to the populace & could proudly boast of his unbombed wealth & priceless magnificence of his palace and its furnishings. Indeed none of the Indo-European kings so well represents our Achaemenosh as does the vain, moody, spendthrift, and bloodthirsty Xerxes I.

Yet Cambyses has been suggested as the King of the Medo-Persian Empire who must be understood under the name of Ahasuerus.

This is not done on philological grounds ^{so much} ~~on~~ ^{striking} the resemblance between Cambyses' character and that of Ahasuerus, but particularly because of chronological difficulties. If Xerxes be taken to be meant by the Ahasuerus of our book, Mordchai must have been at least 125 years old when Xerxes ascended the throne. If he was one of those who went into captivity with Jeconiah, King of Judah, in 598 B.C. and he, by supposition, was only 12 years old, he would have rounded his century & a quarter when Xerxes succeeded his father in 485 B.C. His Cousin Esther must have been a faded flower when her guardian Mordchai was only 125 years old. Thus if Xerxes be taken to be the real ~~that~~ Ahasuerus, the youthful beauty of Esther, whereby she won the love of the King,

would have to have been gotten from the fountain of eternal youth. To obviate this chronological difficulty, some shift the scene & date back to the reign of Cambyses,¹ who ascended the throne in 529 B.C. which would diminish the age of Esther by some 40 years. But even so, the same objection could be raised viz. that even at the age of 40 (and that is the very lowest we can imagine her to be under the circumstances) she would be hardly the beauty to surpass all the maidens of the Persian monarch's vast realms in her beauty of form & features. To meet this difficulty the unyielding advocates of the historical correctness of Esther catch at the passing straw & make Mordechai the uncle instead of the cousin of his adopted daughter. This far-fetched rendering of the text seems satisfactory to those who feel called upon to defend scriptural infallibility, but to me it appears flimsy & untenable exegesis.

¹ Besides Cambyses reign was too short. Cf. Es. III?

To make it possible for Esther to have been a blushing, youthful & modest maiden, commentators feeling themselves called upon to force the translation of verses 5-6^{of chapter III} so as to silence all objections, have made נִשְׁכָּן (verse 6) refer either to Kish, or they refer it to Mordechai ~~but~~ in the sense, not that he was carried away into exile, but ^{that} he happened to reside in Shushan being a descendant of those who were led into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. Thus it happened that he dwelt in the capital of the Persian Empire.

The mere fact that commentators, finding themselves in desperate straits, must resort to such ^{an} unnatural junction of the relative clause to the word it modifies, proves that the text as it stands is in the way of accepting Xerxes as the King of Esther. If נִשְׁכָּן refers to Kish, the author should have repeated it for Charnese or used a different construction. But נִשְׁכָּן refers to יִשְׁכָּן but

it is so far from it because of the genealogical line that is introduced.

- (3) The LXX and Josephus II 6 both give Artaxerxes^{Longimanus} as the Ahasuerus of the Bible but this opinion is untenable as Artaxerxes is invariably called אחשורוש in the Bible. As the King in Esther is never so called, this identification of Ahasuerus with Artaxerxes is not allowable.

- (4) Some have maintained by Suerdes should be taken as the monarch called Ahasuerus.

But a single reference to the text of Esther ^{will refute this theory for there} (III 7) we read of the twelfth year of Ahasuerus's reign, while it is well known that false Suerdes, the usurper ruled but 7 months. (Herod III 67). From Herodotus III 89ff. we know ^{by Darius Hyastaspis} that the country was divided into 20 satrapies, which were, in turn, composed of different peoples, varying in number. Thus the 20 satrapies were ruled over by 120 governors. But Persia itself was not included in these

20 constituent parts of the Empire. We know from Esther itself, as well as from Herodotus, that 7 princes were privileged to "see the face of the King" at all times. If we suppose that these 7 princes had their respective territories or districts, we have 127 provinces in all as making up the whole Empire, in which statement (Es. I') our author is historically correct. But as Darius drew these boundaries between the adjacent provinces for purposes of taxation, it was impossible for the author of Esther to have spoken of the false Smerdes.

- (5) As Mordechai was, according to the plain meaning of B⁵ carried away captive in 589 B.C. & would thus have been at least ^{years old} 120, when Xerxes ascended the throne, some have made Xerxes the King, ^{to be} understood by Ahasuerus of Esther.

Es. I¹⁴

- (6) Reshi makes Darius Hyetaspis the original of Ahasuerosh.² But while this view is to some extent plausible as Darius did attempt to add Ethiopia to his Empire but failed, it cannot be countenanced as it was Darius Hyetaspis who allowed the Jews to continue their work on the Temple, which had been interrupted because of the false & malicious accusation brought before him by the Samaritans. "No two characters could well afford a more striking contrast to each other than those of Darius & Xerxes; that of Darius was on various occasions marked by the tenderest humanity."

Darius, the constant friend of our people, could never have consented to their cruel extermination, nor was he so indifferent to the concerns of his subjects as to entrust the responsible reins of government into the inexperienced hands of a self-seeking, vain, and unfeeling friend.

¹ Beloe's trans. of Herod. Note to Herod. 7³⁹

² Eory Medo - Persian King from Gyaxares I to Darius III has been suggested as the archetype of Ahasuerosh. This is not surprising since Ahasuerosh, like Xerxes, is not a proper name but simply a title.

Still others understand Artaxerxes^{Longimanus} by Ahasuerus.
 We know that he was favorable to the Jews, having per-
 mitted Ezra to go to Jerusalem in the 7th year
 of his reign [Ez. 7:1-7]. If we suppose this kindness
 was due to Esther's influence, he would most likely
 not have consented to the Jews' extermination in his
 12th year. If, on the other hand, Artaxerxes al-
 lows Ezra to journey to his brethren in Palestine
 of his own free-will, it is all the more improb-
 able that he would have changed his attitude toward
 the people whose law he calls the law of God.

Besides in his twentieth year, the same Artax-
 erxes grants Nehemiah, his butler's request
 to be allowed to visit & guide his brethren in

Judaea. If Artaxerxes is the same as Ahasuer-
 us why is he not spoken of as אחשורוש as
 he is regularly called in Ezra? There was a
 story native Persian historians a report that
 the mother of Bahman i.e. Longimanus was a
 Jewess. Hence Xerxes was most likely
 the Medo-Persian monarch our author had in mind.

Are Esther & Mordechai & Haman Pseudonyms?

As critics have encountered great difficulties in deciding upon what Medo-Persian ruler should be named as the prototype of Ahasuerus, (and how well they have succeeded is evidenced by the wonderful unanimity of their views!) ^{secondary} this problem has ^{incidentally} listed their best efforts as all were loath to surrender their belief that some King known to history must have furnished the material history, that forms the kernel of truth contained amid the husk of accretions. As they have assigned almost as many different persons as there have been students of the question, they have devoted, ~~to no purpose~~, time & attention to discovering the identity of our immortalized co-religionists, whose real names are however doomed to oblivion, as their personalities must remain buried among the ruins of time unless the identity

of Ahasuerus is established beyond a doubt.¹

Archbishop Usher makes $\omega\gamma\tau\omega\nu\kappa$ Darius
Hystaspis, Atossa = Vashti, and Esther = Antystone.

But this is impossible as according to Herodotus
Antystone is the daughter of Cyrus and hence could
certainly not be the youthful wife of Xerxes, who
ascended the throne about 45 years after Cyrus's
death. Besides Atossa had 4 sons by Darius
(Herod. 3¹¹⁸) hence she could not be Vashti; else
the author of Esther should have mentioned her sons.

Besides Vashti was divorced in Xerxes' 3rd
year,² which doesn't well agree with the preceding.

"Many learned men, and Scaliger among others,
pretend that this princess [Amestris] is the same with
queen Esther. A vain similitude of name, the cruelty
of Amestris, of which Herodotus gives various examples,
the barbarity with which Esther treated the 10 children of

² Cf. Es. 13, 19.

¹ It is impossible to identify Mordechai, Esther & Haman, without knowing who the
king Ahasuerus is; were this not the case, our knowledge of the identity of the 3 former words
be unfailing means of determining the king's identity.

Haman, and the enemies of the Jews, have given rise to this supposition, but Esther was of a Jewish, Anestris of a Persian family. The father of this last was a satrap named Onophas, according to Ctesias, and Otanes according to Herodotus. If any stress were to be laid on a ^{mere} name we might as well affirm that Esther was the same as Otossea, for she was also called Hadassa; but in my opinion we ought not to conclude that Darius was the same with Ahasuerus. (Larcher). - Anestris was Xerxes' queen during his 1st & 12th years.

No historical character can be made to play the part assigned to the heroine of the Biblical book bearing her name. Were her real self known, it would be comparatively easy to decide who her guardian uncle or cousin was in fact.

The character of Haman suffers as a result of our ignorance as to the genuine archetypes of which our ^{people's} history, contained in the Book of Esther, claims to give the principal outlines. Were the real Esther, Xerxes & Ahasuerus open secrets to us, we could certainly find a person and

covering the description of Haman. But as this pre-requisite knowledge² is beyond our command we must in the mean time despair of being introduced to the man Haman⁴ in life-like form.

Though we are unable to identify Mordechai with any person known to history, it was evidently the intention of our author to convey the idea that he was a court officer¹ for he was constantly "sitting at the gate of the King," where it would have been possible to overhear the plot of the 2 courtiers against the life of the King.³ Besides we find that Mordechai returns to the "gate of the King" immediately after being led through the streets of Susa, seated on the royal steed,⁵ which

Nota.

² Despite the fact that ^{we} cannot identify Esther + Mordechai we, now + then, read reports similar to the following:

"It is reported that the tombs of Esther + Mordechai have been found. Interesting inscriptions on the tombs have been sent to one of the leading European Rabbis. The discovery is regarded as important in yielding confirmation to the Biblical account which has been so much doubted by many." (Jewish "Criticism" Feb. 3/99).

¹ Leuch's "Mysteries of Esther" ³ Es. II ²¹⁻²³ ⁵ Es. II ¹²
⁴ Josephus + Bible call him "The Agagite"; LXX makes him a Gogite (Es. 38²)

took place early in the morning. (Es. 5¹⁴ 7732).

Mordchai must have been a court-officer else we would not find the repeated mention of his "sitting in the gate of the King." Besides where he nothing more than an idler, whiling away his time about the palace, Haman would never have tolerated his insubordination but would speedily have dispatched him and would not have resorted to the means he did to wreak vengeance on his enemy.

Besides it would have been wholly impossible for Mordchai to communicate with Esther, were he but one of the common people, yet he seems to have had easy access, either direct or through the medium of messengers, to the Ear of the Queen!

Moreover, it is not likely that Mordchai, ^{could have} succeeded Haman as grand vizier, had he not been in ^{official} some way connected with the court. For his service to the King he had been publicly honored & his relationships with Esther

would scarcely have been sufficient reason to make him the King's double. Mordechai⁴ was surely more than a partner at court. We find it stated in Daniel that after his interpretation of the King's puzzling dream, which his wise men had confessed themselves unable to explain, ~~he said it~~ ^{and} ~~said~~ after all the thanks & honors the King paid him, "Daniel was in the gate of the King" [Dan. 2⁴⁹] which must signify that he occupied some honorable position at court. In addition to all this evidence, we have the following point. Whence did Mordechai get his information as to the ¹7000 talents which he knows & tells the eunuch, if he was not employed at court in an official capacity; especially since the outside world probably knew nothing of Haman's proffer of 10000 talents² as an offset to the King's loss, which the King refused to accept?³

¹ Es. 4⁷, ² Es. 3⁹, ³ Es. 3¹⁰. ⁴ Es. VI¹⁰ The King speaks of him as Mordechai "who sits in the gate of the King". The King's counselors awaited their instructions in a vestibule (224) Herod. J.

Dr Nettie says that we are author to assign the 11th instead of the 12th year of Ahaseuerush as that in which ~~the~~ Haman had so great influence over his King, the grand vizier could be identified with Artabanus, the chief of the body-guard, who actually killed Xerxes.

Is Esther Historical?

There is a ^{perplexing} diversity of opinion on this question. There is at least one point at which all critics meet & agree. All are willing to grant that there may be some historical basis for the story contained in our book; but at the same time almost no one would unreservedly accept the book as it stands as unimpeachable history.

The statement as to the exact sum of money Haman offered the King¹, the giving of the names of those who saw the face of the King², and those of Haman's ten sons³, the report, in quotation marks of the messages that Mordechai & Esther exchanged⁴, the dramatic situation in which the villain Haman is unmasked⁵, the imposition of a tribute by the King⁶, the excellent description of the palace & tapestries that added lustre to the banquet⁷ — all these & many more such notices appear to some cogent reasons for believing Esther to be historical. The appeal to the court records⁸ is another proof of this contention, some say.

¹ Es. III 9; ² I 14; ³ IX 7-9; ⁴ IV 5-16; ⁵ VII 2-6; ⁶ X 1; ⁷ I 6, 14 etc.

⁸ Es. X 2

Others claim that Esther must be at least in part historical as Purim was already in Josephus's day celebrated far & wide and certainly if the facts given by our author as explanatory of the origin & appropriateness of observing Purim were entirely unfounded, the festival would never have been adopted by our ancestors. To this argument their opponent rejoins, ^{that} he does not admit that the purpose of the book of Esther is to explain the origin of Purim, as Purim itself was but a disguised nature festival adopted by the Jews from the Babylonians. On this theory then the foregoing proof of the historical character of Esther is wholly invalidated.

Some maintain that Esther is unmistakably a romance, showing the art of the dramatist in the arrangement of the contents. The author seeks contrast; he raises the wicked Haman, step by step, to his high throne of vanity & greatness that his fall may be the more unexpected & pronounced. The obscure, captive Jewess, whose people has been given over to certain death, wins the heart of the King above so many more-favored applicants for the vacancy in the Kingdom & the King's affection, and is exalted in order

to come to the timely rescue of her co-religionists. He despised Jew ~~Haman~~ is heralded in the streets of Susa as the special friend of the king, on the very day intended by Haman to be his doom-day. To add to the striking picture, Haman is himself made the direct means of honoring his abhorred foe, and he himself must ^{in person} pay honor to the man who should have met death at his hands on that self-same day. The arrangement of the episodes is done in the most effective way in order to lead up to a startling catastrophe; ^{it} and has been remarked ^{that} not a single unnecessary incident has been introduced into the various scenes of this tragedy. The plot fits together too well for the account to be historical. It shows that the author had planned his story before he commenced to put it down in black & white. The ways of Providence are not usually so direct & easily traceable as this author would have us believe, as he evidently wishes to impress his readers with the historical genuineness of his narrative.

Objections have been raised by the score against the ^{historical} genuineness of our book. Who can believe that the King's feast (Es. I 4) lasted half a year? This is answered by saying that the princes were received in delegations, following one another.

Would Ahasuerus have deposed his queen Vashti for refusing to obey his summons to appear before him & his bacchanalian courtiers, when all men know that it was improper for ^{even} ordinary women in Persia to be seen by men and therefore it was insulting on Ahasuerus's part to expect her to pose among his drunken counselors. This difficulty is brooked aside by saying ^{that} this demand was made when the King was under the influence of strong drink. The simple fact that Vashti in Persian means beautiful, and the notice [Es. I"] that the King, priding himself on her beauty, wished to show her off to the populace, casts suspicion on the historical character of our story. It is certainly a strange coincidence that her name should express her leading quality! Should we not rather suspect that this name Vashti was suggested to ^{author's} ~~our~~ mind because he wished to represent the Queen as of surpassing comeliness? Is it likely that the Jews, having 11 months in which to escape, should have remained inactive in the face

of certain destruction? This weak point did not occur to our author's mind, which was bent on emphasizing a lesson indispensable for many of his contemporaries. Wholly absorbed in accomplishing this single design, his attention did not detect such improbable statements. Could

Haman have been of Amalek since we read in Holy Writ of the extermination¹ of this enemy of Israel? Our author could not have committed this error were he a historiographer. As our text stands,² [II 4+5], Mordechai & therefore also his cousin & adopted child Esther must have been graced with the crown of old age at the time when she found such exceptional favor in the eyes of the King through her beauty. We know moreover that in the Orient maidens are in bloom at the tender age of 12 + 13, while according to ^{the most generous} calculations Esther could not be less than 50 when she appeared before the King for the first time.

It is most unlikely that the relationship existing between

¹ Es. II 15-17; נחש referring back to ויגדו v. 4.

Mordechai & Esther could have remained unknown, especially since Esther & Mordechai communicate by means of a Eunuch, who, from the contents of the message & his knowledge of the decree against the Jews, must have concluded rightly that Mordechai was a Jew & that he was no stranger or mere acquaintance of Esther. Since this relationship existed, Esther too was of the condemned nation. This inference is inevitable & must have forced itself on the eunuch, who probably would not have failed to disclose this bit of interesting gossip; thus the ^{queen's} nationality, religion & family connection would most likely have become known to Haman, who as a result would not have dared to execute his intention of exterminating the people, which meant the death of the King's beloved Queen. Even in Chap. VII where the Queen pleads in behalf of her people, who are "devoted to utter destruction," she does not reveal her religious affiliations & descent, and the King does not take enough interest in what the Queen says to inquire ~~at all~~ ^{at all} what people of the many under his sway was meant by "Jews." [Es. VII⁴.]. Still Haman is mowed away at once & hanged. This whole story abounds with psychological slips

which can be satisfactorily explained only by remembering that in writing this book the author purposed to teach a lesson — the indestructibility of national Israel — and that in lending all his energies to concocting a tale that would forcibly bring this lesson home to men, he fell into these unnoticed pitfalls and silently confessed that he was not writing history but preaching a sermon by means of a story.

Cassell offers the religious comment on the book viz that it "tells the history of miracles"; hence he ~~the~~ holds it an accurate account of facts.

Josephus [*Contra Apion* I⁸] regards Esther as historical as he treats even the additions found in the LXX as reliable reports.

Herodotus does not describe the feast referred to in I⁵ hence many regard its splendour and magnificence but imagined by our author as something that it would have befitted a Persian monarch to have at a banquet given to all the governors of his provinces.

Doubt as to the historical character of Esther arises from the fact that the names given by Herodotus of those

who saw the face of the King" cannot not easily be made to coincide with those found in our book (E.I.¹⁴)

And besides Herodotus does not mention the fact of Vashti's loss of favor & displacement - a remarkable act indicative of Xerxes' character, which Herodotus could not have well known & failed to record.

~~Herodotus~~ says Esther is full of improbabilities & impossibilities. "According to Bunsen" Esther is a legend & "embodies the legends," according to Rensz, "of the Purim festival."

The nearest approach we have to the life of Xerxes, according to Herodotus, of any surrender of his imperial power & prerogative, is the installment of Artabanus as temporary ruler of the Empire during Xerxes' invasion of Europe & Greece. (Herod. VII 52) This Artabanus was also the uncle of Xerxes and therefore he in no way resembles the character of Haman.

How can our book claim to be historical, advocating 2 days' celebration of Purim, while the LXX & know only one day the 14th of Adar?

¹ Copts celebrate Dec. 20 as Saint Esther's day.

Would moreover, Herodotus ^{have} overlooked so wise - of great
+ threatening a destruction of life as the decree of Haman
aimed at, or would the massacre of 2000 Persian
subjects not have been referred to by him in speaking of
Xerxes' reign?

It seems that the Jews were permitted to put to death
only those who attacked them! Could there have numbered
2000 or rather could the Jews have planned so many out-
right serious losses of life, especially as they were
egregiously inferior in number to their heathen neighbors.

Probability does not favor the truthfulness of
our author's summation of the outcome of the conflict.

In making the loss of the Persians so great is
it not possible, even most likely, that he had in
mind the phrase of Isaiah (11¹³) ^{וְהָיוּ} ^{וְהָיוּ} ^{וְהָיוּ}
which he claims to have been verified; this sym-
bolism gains strength, since in Chap. VII⁶ Haman
is called a 75.² If the use of the identical word did
¹ Es. IX²; ² Cf. VIII!

not remind the author of Esther of the promised fate of Israel's Enemies, the idea ^{of Isaiah} must have been uppermost in his thoughts when he made the terrible punishment suffered by the Persians reach the enormous loss of 70000 lives.

Hermotimus was the favorite Eunuch of Xerxes, and none of the Eunuchs spoken of by our author bears a name resembling that of Hermotimus.

In the Christians' Bible Esther is placed among the historical books. The author of the 2 Targums to Esther regarded Esther as historical, but took liberties in some of the details. It differs also from the LXX in the contents of prayers put into the mouth of Mordecai & Esther. The Syriac version also has peculiarities of its own.

Could the King not rescind the original reckless decree issued & promulgated by revengeful Haman, without recourse to a counter-decree? Or would the King permit the butchery of 70000 of his native subjects?

jects to insure the safety of a transplanted, captive
race? Would Mordechai have shown his inhumanity &
shown his inability as a statesman by thus arousing
the bitter hatred of the people by his unnecessary an-
gelty? (Rensz).

Baumgarten says that the author of Esther is faithful
to historical facts ^{so far as it} represents the Persian Jewish ^{exiles} as
indifferent, if not ashamed of their religion.

Dr. Wetzel is willing to allow that Purim originated as
our author represents it, but he is inclined to doubt the
accuracy of the remaining facts adduced as the cause
for the institution of Purim. As grounds justify of
his skepticism, he assigns the fact that our author apparently
means what he says - viz. that the princes & officers of the
king celebrated the feast conjointly for 180 days & not as some
"repairers of the breaches" maintain that these royal guests
came in successive squads. Besides he cannot understand
how even the most heartless of kings could have permitted a
decree to be published commanding the slaughter of two
million souls, which number the king's Jewish subjects ^{approximately} reached.
Profane history, despite wholesale butcheries, affords no parallel.

insoluble

"One authority admits the difficulty of the problem we are now considering by confessing in despair: "It is impossible to determine where facts begin & fiction ends:"

Would the Persian Subjects, who far outnumbered the Jews, have suffered a loss of 7000 souls, after having 8 1/2 months' time to prepare themselves for war against the Jews, who, it appears, were permitted to attack only their aggressive enemies. Indeed might not the non-Jews have risen to a man & ended, once for all, the very existence of a handful of Jews, who were at their mercy? Our author seems to answer "no" & in so doing humiliates himself. Would the governors have sided against their more closely related non-Jewish subjects & favored the cause of the Jews? No sane & unbiassed man would claim this.

"The story is based more on feeling which, intensified by similar past experiences, grew in proportions & became endeared to the suffering people."

The author's tone is that of an advocate, not that of an objective historian. Its foreign name would point to the foreign origin of the fiction, which the author aims to introduce into Palestine.

The fact that Mardchai is styled "the Jew" is proof positive to some that the book of Esther is a transcript of the court chronicles. Besides the Persian name of the Jewish festival, the claim, is in favor of their view. On this theory, the abrupt ending of the book is accounted for, as only so much of the King's records concerned the Jews & their deliverance. Likewise the explanations of court usages would thus be shown to be necessary as the Jews, ^{both in Persia & Palestine} knew nothing of them.

Prof. Joy denies the historical character of the narrative as no other sources speak, at all, of the facts therein contained. He thinks it most unlikely that the King of Persia would have raised two foreigners - Mardchai, & Haman, the Egyptian, - to the highest positions in the State.

Besides the Jews & Persians seem to have enjoyed friendly relations except once when the Jews rebelled. It appears to him that the book has at bottom the ancient deadly animosity existing between the Amalekites & the Jews, who were commanded to utterly exterminate the despised Amalekites. Others find in addition to all these objections the too close resemblance & copy by our author of the story of Joseph in Egypt, with which it has many things in common.

52

Date & Place of Composition & Author.

Variety is the characteristic of the critics on these topics. Some assert that the book was written soon after the events recorded, took place, hoping thereby to explain why the observance of the feast by all Jews was urged by the author. He was, they imply, advocating the general celebration of a recently instituted festival marking a historical marvellous deliverance of which the book gives the account. But if this book be regarded as an unsullied history, it is certainly out of place, and should be placed after the preceding historical books, as all Protestant versions, following Luther, have it. Ginsberg explains its present position after Koheleth by reminding us that Esther is read later in the year than Ecclesiastes.

Geikie assigns the (authorship) date of Esther to the early part of the Greek period, which began in 332 B.C. when it was absolutely neces-

party to remind the Jews of their allegiance to their ancestral faith, because Greek influences were weakening its hold on the minds of the Jews who came into contact with Greek thought. Thus a distinctively Jewish festival, commemorative of God's special concern for Israel, was instituted hoping thereby to win back the hearts of the religiously lukewarm to the God of Israel.

Kuenen thinks our book was a product of the 3rd Pre-Christian Century when the Greek baneful influences had reached their highest point of effectiveness in making Jews less attached to their religion & cult.

Among the various authors named & known to history we find Hordetai¹, Ezra² & Joachin³ the High-priest.

according to some conservative critics, Havernick has thoroughly refuted the grounds on which Bertholdi, De Wette & Bleek have agreed on the Maccabean time as the date of Esther's composition.

¹ Cf. Es. 9²⁰; 450 B.C. Augustine & Origen assign Esther to Ezra.

² By Jewish writers, while others lay it to the account of the Queen of the Great Synod, which came to welcome about 300 B.C.

This reason for naming a much earlier date are the following:

- (1) From 9³² & 10², the author of our book seems to demand equal reliability both for his statements and the entries on the Royal chronicles, which he feels certain his contemporaries know to exist. Hence he tells his story in good faith and refers his readers to the state records for verification of his report.
- (2) The detailed description of the court, its accuracy and minuteness, prove the author to have been quite familiar with all he describes.
- (3) The idioms of Esther are those of Ezra, Nehemiah & Chronicles, with a few Persianisms interspersed. Hence, & especially because of the Persianisms, the book was written in Persia 13 centuries before the Maccabean revolt.
- (4) The date of the King Ahasuerus cannot be made later than that of Artaxerxes, which necessitates an earlier date for the composition of the book.

The chronicles of the King of Judah & Israel. This he does advisedly as these Court records were extant & the author's Epitomized histories of the Kings of the 2 dynasties could be verified by reference to the Chronicles. But in the case of our author, there is inadequate doubt as to the facts mentioned in latter part of the work. I think it is the time to explicitly apologize, and that the facts were as truly the contrary as the representation. The simple statement of the author of Kings is not in that his book may have been corrected.

This is done in imitation of the author of Kings, who refers the reader to the books

55

Cassell dates the book as having been composed between 458 B.C. and 469 B.C. and that it was written by a Persian, who wished to introduce the feast of Purim among all Jews ^{in the Empire}. The details of the strife between Esther & Haman lead him to believe that it was written by ~~one~~ a contemporary of Queen Esther & one who knew the misadventures of court life in general & of this particular period especially, for his minutious reports as to harem-life, the furnishings at the palace & the customs of Xerxes' time are proof positive to Cassell that the author of Esther was certainly a chronicler of current events of his day, particularly those that concerned his own captive people. Doubts as to the historical character of Esther he attributes to the critics' ignorance of Oriental modes of life and lack of historic sense. The fact that the King imposes a tax on his lands (10%) & the islands has not information that any one gave one of Xerxes' generation would ^{have} had, argues Cassell. The naming of the exact amount Haman offers as a restitution to the King for his loss in taxes appears to Cassell a point in favor of his assigned date of composition.

But the most reliable critics place the date of Esther's composition at the time of the Maccabean War. They hold that Daniel & Esther are products of the same age, the former emphasizing the religious & especially the naturalistic side of ^{the} Judaism of their day; the latter book was intended to gain the sympathies of that class of Jews, who were so mostly by birth & nationality, & to whom their religion appealed but little. The author of Esther had this unreligious class in view, and doubtless their numbers were so great as to ^{cause} serious anxiety as to the fate of the nation & religion. Greek influences & philosophy had weakened the former strong bonds of faith & Israel was in danger of dissolution as much from differences of opinion within as they were in peril of overthrow at the hands of Antiochus Epiphanes. Union was required within the country, and this community of interests & purpose could be engendered among the different classes ^{only} in different ways. The book of Daniel laid stress on the distinctness of Jewish ritual, hoping to make the cultists more

enthusiastic in the cause of their religion. The author
 of Esther addressed himself to the arduous task of winning
 back the alienated affection & patriotism of the hosts of
 Jews who were willing to surrender their nationality & all
 else, believing that it was useless to fight for a lost cause,
 which at best was but a source of dissension & per-
 secution. The book undertook to bring vividly before
 these anti-nationalists, who cared not a whit for re-
 ligious observances, the case of the Persian Jews
 whose lives were in greater jeopardy than were those of the
 Jews of the Maccabean time and still God saved them
 from the "snare of the fowler." In like manner Is-
 rael need only remain true to its nationality & its dis-
 tinctive institutions and help would certainly come. The
 religious element is, according to this large class of
 critics, intentionally omitted as it would simply have
 harmed the cause of Israel's national existence in
 the eyes of these irreligious men. The cause of the nation
 was best served by conciliating these dissenters and
 this was the sole purpose of the author of Esther.

Thus the book would have been written on Palestinian soil

and the story would have been ^{merely} the vehicle for the embodiment & promulgation of the national idea - viz. that Israel as a nation was impensable, that no force, no matter how powerful, could blot out its name. In the eyes of these critics, Esther is a romance, having a purpose and in no likely sense a narration of historical fact.

Some assign a late date to Esther as the author shows his ignorance, (on the assumption that Darius Hystaspis or one of his successors is the same as Achaemenosh) of ^{the} court requirement that the King might not marry outside of 7 royal families. The author of Esther makes the King wed a captive Jewess, which was wholly unpermissible for Darius Hystaspis or his successors to do. Those who try to save the historical character of Esther point to the unprecedented act of Cambyses who married his own sister, which was contrary to Persian practice and must have roused the indignation of his subjects. In this case, Darius or Xerxes might have had the effrontery to outrage the sensibilities of the people and prove faithless to a covenant he

1 Chron. 31

had entered into!

Gesenius + Ewald place the composition of Esther in the 4th century B.C. — in the time of the Ptolemies + Seleucidan Kings. A Palestinian is of course the author, who lays the scenes of his supposed history in Persia, whose history was not familiar to the Jews in their native land. Hence such a book's genuineness would not be doubted by a credulous age, ignorant of history, philology & foreign lands + their peculiar customs. The mere fact that it pretended to be historical, (and none could be found to prove it other than historical), added to its authority, particularly as many found ^{crystal} religious & national beliefs dwelt upon by the author. The tone of the book won the hearts + minds of the generation for whom it was written because the fire of hope for national independence was burning low & this book was full that rekindled the flickering flame & warmed the hearts of the Israelites to an enthusiasm for national independence that led to the defeat of Antiochus.

Spinoza says the book of Esther is the product of a scribe, written after the re-dedication of the Temple by Judah Maccabee. Hence it was written in 2nd Century on Palestinian soil.

The book was surely written after the fall of the Persian Empire, if our author was a Persian, as he finds it necessary to explain the court customs and the irrevocable character of the royal edict. If, however, the book was written in the Holy Land, these explanations would be required to make intelligible our author's account of court manners etc., as these would be entirely unknown to his Palestinian brethren, even though the book had been written while the Persian power was still a reality.

Leclerc's Bibliotheca says Esther "embraces fragments collected by Hellenistic Jews."

Lagarde ^{favours} ~~opposes~~ the theory of a Palestinian author as he maintains that it was not customary among Persians to cast lots, this, however, as ~~the~~ Jews, was practiced by the Jews.

1 Es. II¹²⁻¹⁴; I Es. ¹³ etc.

Philpsohn maintains that Esther was written much later than the supposed date of the events narrated. In our author represents the Jews as living in all parts of the world (127 provinces constituting the world) and dwelling in open countries & plains as well as in well-fortified cities.

Besides the Jews are known to have distinctive laws.

Proverbs VI¹³ implies that the Jews were known to have enjoyed remarkable deliverances from imminent dangers.

This was not the case so early as 475 B.C. Israel was not scattered in the Babylonian captivity. Philpsohn says that conditions that might have suggested the narrative ^{which our author wrote} existed immediately after Alexander the Great's death; under his quarreling successors the Jews suffered, and hence the book was written late. Dr. Philpsohn is of the opinion that the author of Esther produced his book in the pre-Maccabean days.

Stack shows that no mention is made of Jerusalem & the re-constituted Temple service, hence it must have been written in Persia; and a ~~third~~ second reason for this opinion is the author's familiarity with Persian customs.

Dr. Meyhorn assigns the 2nd pre-Christian century as the date of composition.

I evidence that the book was written in the 2nd century B.C. we may note that the Septuagint in Eccl. Ist & 9th calls Haman a Macedonian, by which is meant the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes.

Dositheus, who, according to the LXX, introduced the Book of Esther in Egypt, is identified by Hitzig with Philometus (178-177) and Hölderke makes him Dositheus II (114). Hence the book was written probably only a short time previously; since Palestine & Egypt were in those days in constant communication & easy of access to each other's population.

One of the strongest & best proofs of the late date of our book is based on the peculiarity of the diction, words being found in our text that are found in no other Biblical book, and some that are formed but with different constructions.

Words of late origin
not found elsewhere in Bible.

שדב'ש	תכריך
הצלה	התהדר
בקשה	עלככה
זע	
נזק	
גדול	

forms & expressions
Words of Aramaic origin.

רצוי
עבד מצוה
עשה יום טוב
מה רצוי

Persian (מדינת)

פרתמים

ספר

פתגם

אחשדרפנים

פתשגן (פרשגן ^{Ezra})

רמכים

אגרת

ש is not used for נש because the author pretending to give us history employs the style of the author of Kings who also quotes the Chronicles of the Kings, as does our author.

The Religious Character of the Book of Esther.

If any point has thrown suspicion on the reliability of Esther and has indeed disputed its right to a place in Sacred Scriptures, it has been the omission of the name of God.

Reading the text as it stands, we nowhere find the name of the Deity in any of its many forms. This has proven a very vulnerable spot in the defence offered for the canonicity, by right of character & contents, of the Book of Esther. This defect is not a late-day discovery but the ancient versions - the LXX, the Vulgate and the Second Targum - all insert prayers to God, which are altogether missing in the Hebrew version.

Indeed one who reads carefully & thoughtfully could not escape noticing the omission of prayer for help & deliverance before Esther ventures to appear before the King, and then later after the remarkable escape.

65

of the entire people. Instead we find that they
rejoiced in a maternal way, with bangquets and the
bestowal of gifts on the poor in their midst.

But not a word of ^{grateful} praise ascends from their
hearts to their Unseen Deliverer. Besides

though Esther orders Mordechai & the Jews of Susa
to fast, she doesn't call upon them to bring their
prayers on high for redemption from the tyrant's
land, though prayer & fasting went hand in hand as
the Bible repeatedly attests.¹ It seems then that the
author has purposely omitted all reference to God.³

Various attempts have been made to explain this
odd circumstance, especially in a Biblical book.

Ben Ezra says that the book of Esther is the translation
of a chronicle² and as the name of Israel's Lord
was there unmentioned, the author made a faithful
copy, without adding to the original.

¹ 2 Sam. 12¹⁶, 2 Chr. 20³, 2 Sam. 12²¹, Jer. 14¹².

² Rabbi Isaac [Baal Akeida] adds that Mordechai wrote
the chronicle for the King, hence the God of Israel is unnamed.

³ Scott's view.

Rabbi Moses [Haell Moshe] explains the omission as follows: "Mordchai had to show the book to Ahasuerus and he didn't dare, therefore, to rouse the King's anger by attributing the great deliverance of the Jews to anyone but the King himself." Another authority is of the opinion that the suppression of the name of God is "a true sign that the prophetic spirit had already departed from the people."

To Blek, Seidler and others this fact alone is sufficient guarantee that the book is unauthentic. The reverent, ^{mod-me-tang-er} Havernick is forced to confess "that the piety of Mordechai & Esther was of an inferior kind."

Lange says in this connection: "A childlike trust in God & a true moral fear of God had no more a proper place."

Zunz has found by actual count that the King is referred to 187 times in Esther, and therefore he can assign no satisfactory explanation for the omission of outspoken reference to the God of Israel, who was the source of his people's deliverance. Zunz concludes that there was method & purpose in the author's madness, that it was an intentional oversight.

Matthew Henry occupies a middle ground, and maintains

that "the finger of God is seen everywhere," though the source of all Blessings is not mentioned by name.

Others have sought attentively to discover some concealed reference to the God of Israel and they sought cite groups of 4 words whose initial letters, or final consonants placed side by side in order will form the tetragrammaton. Among these the words:

5 { (V⁴) הָיָא וְכָל הַנָּשִׁים יִתְנֶנּוּ (20); יוֹצֵא הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה מִן הַיּוֹם ²
 (V¹³) כִּי כָלְתָה אֵלֶיךָ הָרֵעָה ³; זֶה אֵינְנוּ שׁוֹהֵ לֵא ²
 (VII⁵) הָיָא זֶה, וְאֵי זֶה הָיָא In this ^{last} citation

the final letters of the first 4 words ^{read forwards} and the final consonants of the last 4 words read backwards make

יהוה the name by which God reveals himself to Moses. [Ex. 3¹⁴]. These acrostics are eagerly

sought & great stress & significance ^{are} attached to them by those who must apologize for & vindicate the ^{imputed} unreliable nature of the ^{our} book. Such ^{successions of consonants} abound in the Bible

¹ Dr. Bulinger says the name of God was not mentioned clearly, because: "God's face was hidden, hence his name was hidden." ⁵ Quarterly Record 1890, "The name of Jehovah in Esther" by Bulinger.

² Dotted letters to be read backwards; ³ dotted letters read forwards.

because the letters י ו ז ח are much-used verbal & nominal affirmatives and it is but natural to expect that, by ^{mere} chance, they should now & then occur in such an order that, ^{read} either from right to left or vice versa, sometimes as pre-positive & sometimes as post-positive, they should form the name of God. Hence Dr. Buhlinger's ingenious *explanis* collapses because the arrangement of words is accidental & not a studied art.

Ibn Ezra assigns another additional reason to the one given above for the omission of specific & outspoken mention of God. He says: "The Persians were accustomed to write the name of their idols under the name of Jehovah. Therefore Mordechai would not insert the name of God."

This, he avers, on the supposition that this is a copy of a chronicle; this view is evidently apologetic and falls to the ground if Mordechai be not the author of our book. Besides Mordechai could well have inserted the name of God as his account was sent to the Jews only. Hence Ibn Ezra's excuse for our author's plotting is valueless & absurd.

Wright says the name of God does not occur proba-
bly because the book was intended to be read on a feast of
rejoicing, (which ^{feast,} he claims, the Book of Esther seeks to
explain), and hence it was thought improper to mention
the name of God in the Book, for which the Jews employed
circumlocutory expressions, as Heaven (שמים).

There are some, however, that maintain that God
is meant by the ^{expression} ~~שמים~~ שמים in Mordechai's successful
pleading with Esther that she should intercede in Israel's
behalf. (Es. 4th). It is well known that in the first &
possibly already the second pre-Christian century,
the Jews disliked to pronounce the שמים דבר, and
as a substitute used Heaven (שמים) שמים and דבר.

But we find the rabbis of those & succeeding centu-
ries employing שמים to designate God; why
then should the obscure author of Esther so scrup-
ulously avoid it. Besides this use of substitute
names for the deity, one of late origin & to suppose
that the author of Esther purposely used שמים for
the deity would place the date of composition of Esther
at the Maccabean period, which all do not grant.
an introduction to the O. T.

Kuenen, who places the date of composition of our book in the 3rd century B.C., accounts for the silence with reference to God & his rule among men on the assumption that at that time "the national & yet not the firm tone of the book may have had weight in some circles."

We need think only of the Greek influence on Palestine to find some justification & support for Kuenen's surmised theory.

I cannot somehow help feeling that there is reference to Providence in the Book of Esther. Even if the book be proven but a myth, the author has indubitably so forged the successive links & the chain of circumstances that they should terminate in the deliverance of God's people. Each episode is a stepping stone in the straight path that leads to the author's final aim — the triumph & escape of Israel. When Mordechai assures Esther that help will come from another source, should she refuse to follow his instruction & plead for her people, he could, under the darkest distressing circumstances, have thought only of God's interposition in behalf of his people. This view

gains force if we bear in mind that only 11 months intervened between the drawing-up & circulation of the Edict and the day that was to mark Israel's end.

For Mordechai, who knew the inferiority of Israel in numbers, to express the confidence that deliverance would certainly come, we must take it as highly probable that he referred to superhuman intervention; for when Israel was marked out as a prey to the hatred of the populace and their hope of enriching themselves with the spoils, it would be the conduct & speech of an insane person to assert his firm faith that, though the net was spread under Israel, the people would somehow experience an unlooked-for ~~means of~~ escape. It is but a firm belief in Providence, who justifies & preserves the righteous, could have put these words into the mouth of Mordechai. In his book "Providence Unfolded in the Book of Esther," Dr. Alex. Carson shows "that there is no unnecessary detail in the narrative which does not bear on the final catastrophe."

Leucht' denies the Religious Character of Esther.
 He shows that Mordechai does not object to the least
 to the marriage of Esther to Ahasuerus, who was a
 non-Jew, while we find that the Bible strictly
 & often prohibits intermarriage. Moreover one of the
 first official acts of Ezra, who lived about the
 time spoken of in Esther was to dissolve the for-
 bidden marriages, which the faithful Jews of Palestine
 had contracted. Besides the prophets & authors
 of 30 Psalms which were written during & after the
 Captivity do not refer to Esther and Mordechai,
 much less do they hold them up as shining exam-
 ples of true piety. Ezekiel speaks of Daniel but
 Mordechai is not mentioned. There must consequent-
 ly be something wrong. The Jews in Persia, of whom Esther
 & Mordechai were typical, were Jews at least but not
 observers of many Biblical and distinctively Jewish
 requirements. The dietary laws, to which Daniel
 remains true, ^{in which his religious distinctiveness seems to consist,} seem utterly unknown to & disre-
 garded by the author of Esther. Mordechai was one of
 the Mysteries of Esther.

those captive Jews who preferred to live unmolested in a foreign land than had a precarious life in Palestine and cultivate the religion of their fathers.

Our rabbis say that it was out of religiousness that Mordechai refused to bow down before Haman.

In Midrash Rabbah to Esther, we read that it would have been idolatry to bend the knee before Haman, for the latter had an image of an idol ~~engraved~~ embroidered on his garments. Yet our author does not say that Mordechai refused to bow before Haman on religious grounds; hence we can not fairly assume this as true.

If any thing, ^{the author's} silence opposes this view. But why then didn't Mordechai bend the knee before Haman, since as prime minister he would & did have to show his loyalty to Ahasuerus in this manner?

Cassell says Esther is prophetic in character as its contents hint at later persecution of Jews, out of which Israel would come forth victorious as they did in

Persia. This view occurred to him post festum & hence has little, & fact no, value.

Our rabbis were of the opinion that in the days of the Messiah only the Five Books of Moses + Esther would be effective, probably because the former gave birth to Judaism and the latter because it assured its perpetuity despite all death-dealing devices. Besides this, the women + children were expected to hear the Megilla read on Purim Eve, - a religious duty quite exceptional for women + children among the Jews.

It is indeed surprising to see that מוסף פורים¹ is not mentioned in Megillath פורים, though we find that in Josephus's time the feast of Purim was universally celebrated.

The Rabbis commenting on the verse: "all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Ps. 98³), say it found fulfillment in the day of Esther + Mordechai. Hence they must ^{have} attached a religious value to Esther.

Dr. Metz finds a religious element in Mordechai's refusal to bow down before Haman + Mordechai's assurance that "relief + redemption will come from another place."

1 Cf. Ps. 124:8 וְיִשְׁעֵנוּ מִיָּד אֲחֵרָהּ וְיִשְׁעֵנוּ מִיָּד אֲחֵרָהּ
וְיִשְׁעֵנוּ מִיָּד אֲחֵרָהּ וְיִשְׁעֵנוּ מִיָּד אֲחֵרָהּ

Disputed Canonicity of the Book.

The book of Esther is admitted into the canon without dispute to-day simply because the canon is closed and men are not primarily concerned with the subject of inspiration as were the Jews & Church Fathers of 2000 years ago. But were the questions to be debated to-day, and ^{were} ~~were~~ the books worthy of being included in the canon to be voted upon, ^{now} there would certainly be many who would be uncompromising & outspoken in their protests against admitting Esther as a part of the sacred writings. For they would argue that a book that delights in blood shed as ^{the heroine} the author of Esther appears to do, so that he pictures Esther as not pained with the spilling of blood until the number of the slain reached this enormous total of 75000; but he displays the fiendish glee of Esther in such slaughter that she is still unsatisfied and asks & receives permission to continue the butchery for another day. The spirit of

the author is not that of a humanity-loving man
 'hence ^{his book} should not be branded sacred; so runs the objection
 failure to

Besides the neglect of prayers and acknowledge
 God's existence & guidance of men's destiny, as well
 as the omission of grateful praise for their salvation adds
 strength to the contention of those who deem Esther as alto-
 gether unworthy of a place among mankind's treasures
 of spiritual truth. It will not surprise us then
 to find that in many ages there were some who protested most
 vehemently against labelling Esther "inspired";

In Megilloth (Jiv. Talmud) 7 we read that 85
 elders among whom there were 35 prophets mocked at the
 introduction of Purim; as it was a non-Mosaic
 feast and Moses had forbidden to add to or dimin-
 ish from his teaching. If the book of Esther was
 written to show the origin of the feast of Purim &
 to urge its general adoption, then these rabbis
 must have denied to Esther the claim to inspira-
 tion [~~and a place in the Canon~~], as it was contra-
 ry to Moses' expressed commands. But its
 canonicity was never doubted ^{among the rabbis}, at least not publicly.

The canonical character of Esther was doubted until 9th A.D.¹

Melito³ omits it from his list of Canonical books, but this may be accidental or he may include it, together with Ezra & Nehemiah, under the collective name Ezras.²

Gregory of Nazianzen likewise does not mention it in his list of Canonical books.

The Rabbis say Esther was written under the influence of the Holy Spirit as it assures Israel that it is imperishable, a statement that would naturally suit our servants of old. Besides the words of Mordechai that relief & redemption were certain to come breathe a religious spirit, justifying the opinion of our Rabbis.

Athanasius was not enthusiastically a supporter of the religious character of Esther, but he regarded it as on a level with non-canonical books.

Josephus [*Contra Apion* I⁸] seems to regard the contents of Esther as apocryphal.
 1 C. H. Toy; Esther as a Babylonian Goddess, *New World* Vol. VI.

² This may well apply to Neh. but it is not likely the case with Esther.

³ Bishop of Sardis - 2nd Cent.

as veritable history and therefore canonical.

In the Vulgate, Esther occupies a place between Tobit & Judith, hence it was considered on a par with these books in religious value, in which view Joy acquiesces, though he ascribes a lower moral tone to Esther than to Tobit.

According to Prof. Rensz, Esther had not been finally & definitely received into the canon in Josephus's day and it seems Josephus had another version of the story which has been lost. Morality & humanity suffered, according to Prof. Rensz, by the acceptance of Esther into the canon.

Luther called it "a pagan book."

Pierce's ^{decided} opinion as to the canonicity of our book is that "the evidence of the divine authority of the book is as unquestionable as any in the sacred record."²

Dr. Philip Barker pays: "The national political feeling was stirred to its depth at the time of the writing of Esther; not the religious side." In not mentioning God, he asserts, that it points to a time when no distinction was made between Jehovah & other gods.

¹ Prof. Joy agrees in this.

² Bible Scholar's Manual.

Origen places Esther after Job which may imply that he doubted its canonicity. But the catalogs of the Council of Laodicea, of Cyril of Jerusalem & of Epiphanius name it among the books of the Canon.

Luther said it was more worthy of being excluded from than included in the canon in which vein he stood alone for centuries, until Simler, Bartholsci, De Wette and others objected to its position in the canon.

Among many reasons for denying its canonicity are the following:

- (1) The tone of vindictiveness was ^{not} characteristic of Jews of Old Testament times, but ^{it} was in place in describing Jews of later date.
- (2) The untheocratic, worldly spirit that pervades the book make it unworthy of equal rank with the other books of Holy Writ.
- (3) The very account betrays its character, it is a romance with a tendency. The episodes are arranged by a dramatic artist so that all may lend aid to the climax — the downfall of Haman when he has reached the pinnacle of earthly glory, and the glorious

triumph of despised Mordechai and the unforeseen rescue of doomed Israel, when its lot was most hopeless.

The fact that the Jews, who had exactly 11 months in which to flee, remained inactive is an incredible statement. Their love of life or of their faith would have driven them to revolt or to seek safety in flight.

Better to die in defence of religion than be a coward & passively await the fatal stroke. Better to sacrifice worldly possessions & preserve what was most dear to men in days of old — their religion — than to remain longer in the midst of their enemies who were decided to exterminate them. These objections the author does not meet & in fact cannot obviate, else his purpose to dwell on the nearness & concern of God for Israel would have been rendered impossible. What may save the integrity of the author is his non-committal attitude; he poses as an objective historian, not as expressing his personal views on Israel's immortality. This alone makes it possible to defend Esther's right to a place in the Canon.

Prof. Joy maintains that "the additions of the LXX [which aim at introducing a religious spirit into the story], mar the unity of the narrative."

He is further of the opinion that it should be considered as a point of moral line of all the pre-Christian national romances, among which he classes Esther.

Purpose of the Book of Esther.

The multifarious interpretations that our book has had will introduce a diversity of opinion as to what our author's aim was in writing the Book of Esther. Each set of critics will have its distinctive answer to our question.

The most natural reply would be that, as all that is contained in Esther leads up to the institution of Purim, it must have been the design of our book to give historical foundation for the feast. Indeed a hasty perusal of the text can give one no other impression, particularly as the book practically ends with the explanation of the origin of the festival. Besides, there are several epitomes of the main facts of the account, all of which seek to impress the reader with the necessity for celebrating Purim because of the events preceding the introduction of the festival. The author seems to rest his case when he has emphasized the grounds on which Purim is to be celebrated by Jews in all the 127 Persian Provinces. Chap. X is evidently an epilogue, having no direct & necessary connection with the main drift of the contents of Esther.

There are others who hold that our author, noticing that some Israelites observed the ~~14th~~ 14th and others the 15th of Adar as a feast, wished to unite these divided camps & thus make it a universal festival,³ undertook to conciliate both factions by calling upon all to celebrate both days as days of rejoicing. We are made least hostile to this view if we read carefully the contents of the letters spread broadcast by Mordechai & Esther with reference to the observance of Purim. "And Mordechai wrote these facts and sent letters to all Jews living in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both far & near. To take upon themselves to celebrate the 14th & 15th of it [Adar] every year." Here all the Jews, both those who "rested from their enemies" already on the fourteenth, and those of Shushan who zealously continued the bar on that date, are charged to regard both the 14th & 15th of Adar as national & religious (?) holidays. The provincial Jews observed only the 14th.² of Adar, according to our author's own confession; why then should they be called on to observe the 15th?

Es. IX²⁰⁻²¹ Cf. IX^{27, 31}

² Es. IX¹⁷.

³ 2 Macc. 15³⁶ speaks of Mordechai's day, celebrated on the 14th of Adar.

The fact, however, mentioned by our author of the generally adopted 2 days' festival, in the face of his own previous assertion that the provincials observed only one day of Purim, has led this 2nd class of critics to assign as our author's aim, the spread, if not the introduction, of 2 days' observance of Purim.²

The 3rd & latest theory as to the task our author has voluntarily shouldered is that he has disguised & welded together a number of myths, that the Jews had borrowed from the peoples among whom they had chanced to live - particularly the Baby lonians & the Persians. The author, ^{of Esther} finding that these heathen myths & the outgrowing nature festival were known & observed by his coreligionists & believing that instead of attempting to eradicate these views, he might to endue them with a national or religious sanction & thus make them a means of good, he attached to these beliefs this festival national & religious import. The people who cling to these 'Es. IX'; ² In fact from IX³¹, we learn that the fast of Esther was likewise to be commemorated year by year as well as the days of gladness & light. This seems to be the purpose of Esther's letter. IX³¹.

borrowed practices, whose real origin & nativity had become
 unknown to them, would gladly welcome his ac-
 count of their religious or national origin & thus they
 would meet with ~~not~~ acceptance with beneficial
 results to Judaism. The people, who were continually
 split up by varying views on subjects of all kinds, would
 in this wise be cemented into a strong unity by the obser-
 vance of the common festival; their national strength
 would be increased, their religious enthusiasm nourished,
 and all this was to be gained without any loss
 to the people in the way of the surrender of holidays
 dear to them. This view is advocated by Prof. Joy &
 Prof. Jensen. Prof. Joy admits that he cannot, on his
 theory, account for the sending of gifts to the poor. May this
 not have been a feature introduced by our author who
 infused Jewish feeling into heathen festivals? Thus
 our ^{adopted} view, according to this 3rd view, is a synthesis
 of heathen spirit & nature festivals & myths, so united
 as to be adapted to the needs of the Jewish people.

Bertheau held that IX²⁰⁻³² betrayed the hand of a different author and hence has rejected them as spurious.

If we regard these verses as ^{written} by another author, we must admit that all that precedes these verses from the beginning of our book was written to explain these verses. Hence this would be assigned as the purpose of our author in writing the book of Esther.

Purim and Its Origin.

As some have assigned the introduction of this festival, or its wider celebration, as the purpose of our author in writing the Book of Esther, it is certainly of not less great importance to examine this festival and learn from the silent ages of the past what their sealed secret is concerning this festival.

Assuming in the first place that it was our author's purpose to explain the origin of Purim or urge its more general celebration, we are surprised that the festival should be so-called simply because lots were used. Our author would have no understanding that 719 is the Persian synonym of the Septuaginta.

But men are, in this age, less ready to believe reports on mere play-acts and they have consequently investigated both the Old & New Persian lexicon in their vain search for the Persian word which our author transcribes 719. But no satisfactory plan or form that by ^{allowable} contraction that all languages understood could be proven to be the original of our author's 719.

Has been discovered. As a result we are led, of necessity, to infer that the word זִינִינִי was coined in the mintage of our author's inventive brain and that he was no Persian scholar who honestly attempted to render into Hebrew equivalents the Persian pounds. If we add the second fact, adduced by some against accepting our author's etymology, viz. that the Persians did not employ "lots" to determine their course of conduct or prophetic events, the objections to our traditional interpretation of the name זִינִינִי must be abandoned.

Besides the peculiarly Hebrew ending יִי, added to a Persian word, would cast suspicion on our author's statement. Besides II Maccabees (composed after 100 B.C.) speaks of the festival ^{as the day of} זִינִינִי; hence we may fairly infer that it was not known by its Persian name in Palestine.

As the Persian original of our word זִינִינִי, Zominem has suggested pubra which means an "assembly" of the gods, also images were brought to the Temple of Marduk at Babylon, where in a special chamber the gods determined the fates. As the fates were among the Jews determined,

lots the author translates the Persian word 719 by the Hebrew 5112. But this proposed identification has been rejected on the ground that h (a hard sound) could not well be lost in pronunciation, which is the usual way ^{in which} words are contracted or corrupted.

Ch. W. Johnson in the *Expositor* for 1896 is reminded of the Assyrian *purnu*, meaning "term of office", hence 0'719 (~~in the~~) originally was a festival or fête that marked the installation of officers for the coming year.

Halévy [*Revue des Etudes Juives* 1887] says 0'719 is derived from an Aramaic root meaning "to break"; hence 719 would mean a fragment, which was used also in casting lots. Hence the word ^{for} fragment had rather also the meaning of "lot." But it has been rejoined, if this derivation be correct, our author need not have claimed a foreign origin for the word. He seems to imply that 719 is a Persian word & hence needs translation. If it be a borrowed Aramaism, it would be a waste of ink to render it into Hebrew as Aramaic was well known & indeed was the *lingua franca* of Palestine.

Halevy himself later thought of the Hebrew root π meaning "to break." But the same objection can now be made viz. that a Hebrew word need certainly need no translation. The author is no lexicographer.

Prof. Joy builds up the present account of Saka on the following data. Athanasius, ^{quoting Hieronymus [280 A.D.]} (2nd c. A.D.) says that on a feast called Saka, which was celebrated ^{in Babylon} for 5 days, master & servant exchanged positions. The servant was clad in kingly garments & ruled as lord during the feast.

This phase of the festival is reflected in the grand vizier Haman doing personal service, as an attendant of Mordechai; who as a private subject was an inferior & servant of Haman. It is not an improbable custom, but it could not be appropriately mentioned in references to the King.

This word Saka Prof. Joy identifies with Zakkamut- or Zagmut, the 1st Babylonian month.

Strabo [X 18] speaks of the festival existing in Persia & known as $\tau\alpha \Sigma \acute{\alpha} \kappa \alpha \acute{\alpha}$, which he describes as a Bacchic festival of endless merry-making, while the people dress in Syrian fashion. The goddess Anaitis (Anahitis) was especially worshipped on this festival.

In Artaxerxes II's Reign we find the goddess spoken of under the name of Nahitta. She may have been adopted by the Persians from surrounding subject peoples, as the Armenians also pay homage to her divinity. Ishtar, her Babylonian counterpart, probably was the recipient of special worship on New Year's Day [Zakmukh]. "While Zakmukh was the official state-rod of the feast, it is conceivable that popular usage had introduced the goddess, who more easily lent herself to the unbridled merry-making of such occasions."

The Persians had also another festival called by the Greeks "Fornidigan" or "Phourdigan", which fell on the 5 days that had to be added to each Persian year, which was composed of 12 months of 30 days each, in order to harmonize the lunar & solar calendars. This feast was devoted to the commemoration of the dead (All Souls' Day). These days were called Farwardin or farwardigan by the Persians themselves. They were of a joyous nature & fell in Spring but it is not certain whether it was a New Year's feast, but it probably was. Legends & others identify this with Purim which was to be a festival of light, joy

and the interchange of presents & sending gifts to the poor. [Eck. IX. 19, 22]. Lagarde makes a distinction between the new year's festival Phourdigan & Farwardgan (All Souls Day) maintaining that the Jews would not have adopted the latter which was not in consonance with Jewish modes of thought.

Lagarde cites the names — phourmini, phourmaia, phourdia & phourmaia — which the LXX applies to what the author of Esther designates as Purim. These 4 various terms Lagarde identifies with Phourdigan or Phoudigan. But Phourdigan does not explain the name Purim satisfactorily.

These Persian feasts were still held at the beginning of Christian Era. The Jews being affected by Babylonian & Persian influences would most likely adopt & adapt these heathen nature festivals as they appropriated Canaanitish forms of worship & festivals, the Babylonian Calendar & the Aramaic script & language.

"All indications go to show that it was on Persian territory that the Jews became acquainted with what they called Purim." Mordechai & Esther are the additions of faith as were Mardoch & Ishtar among the Babylonians.

If, however, Purim corresponds to the new year's festival, we meet the difficulty as to the difference of celebration. Purim is celebrated 2 weeks before the first of the year. Besides the Sakes were celebrated in the month of Loos, which coincides approximately with our July. There is besides no struggle in the Baby Loman account which might be reflected or reproduced in the contest between Mordechai & Haman. "We have no Haman, no plot against a people, no lots & the name of Purim remains an Enigma," according to this theory.

As, on the other hand, almost 500 years separated Athenians from Persians, the name of the month Loos might have been changed. Then, too, the Jews might have borrowed only the mode & not the time of celebrating of the Sakes. But the new year festival already existed among the Jews; it was then in order to disguise the non-Jewish origin of Purim that it was celebrated 2 weeks sooner than it was according to Persian custom.

"The festivals are paralleled & complementary interpretations of national life" and "desire for enjoyment can

Easily be amalgamated with a deity's exploits: Commenced of this fact is the development of religion & its cults, Prof. Joy brings into requisition the Babylonian cosmogonic poem telling of Marduk's victory over Tiamat, who was assisted by his wife Kingu, in his unsuccessful attempt to dethrone the heavenly powers. This story is woven into the fabric of the Esther story of the Bible and forms the groundwork & original of the element of conflict that we find in Esther. Hence the author of our book, intending his book for Jews and his festival to be acceptable to them, represents the Jew Mordechai as the victor in the contest. The name of the victor is Esther shows the source of this part of the narrative to be in the legend referred to above.

Prof. Jensen finds the prototype of our story of Esther in the Babylonian "Story of the 12 Tablets," according to which Gilgamesh (Sargon) assisted by Eabani (half man & half bull) conquers the Elamite King Humbaba & frees his (Gilgamesh's) country from a foreign yoke. Haman of Esther is then a humanized form of the deity King Humbaba or Humbaba, who meets with defeat when

Zeresh, Haman's wife, is the same as Kirisha, Haman's consort. Philologically the two names are alike.

The Baby lonian festival known as Marduk's Day may easily have been adopted by the victorious Persians & remained in vogue also in Baby lon, where the Jews had first witnessed its observance. The Jews could have spoken of it as "Mardochais's Day" & under this name it came to be known when introduced into Palestine.

The distinctive features of the celebration - good cheer, exchange of presents, merry-making & the role of servant in the place of the master - were characteristic also of the Jews' festivities, but the central feature was the glorification of Marduk's victory over an enemy.

The Jews, then, gave the celebration a Jewish coloring by making the hero of the feast a living human being - one of their own faith - in place of the god-hero Marduk. The scenes of the hero's exploits had to be laid in a distant land because of the strained Cf 2 Macc. 15⁶

relations between the Jews and the Syrian & Greek governments.

Mardochai (מָרְדֳּכָי) is given an Aramaic termination to disguise its derivation from the heathen god Marduk, or it was a Jewish-Aramaic patronymic form of the Baby. name Marduka (Marduk's man).

This theory does not account for the prominent part played by "lots," which is the very supposed meaning of the name of the feast. To me it appears, ^{clear} since the god Marduk determines the fates, and in Palestine these were fore-told by the use of lots, and especially as the name "Mardochai's day" was not conducive to the wide-spread adoption of the festival, the author claims that the feast should be called Purim, which means "lots." Thus the three considerations above referred to were all kept in mind by our author & it was this that led him to call the feast Purim.

The nationalization & Judaizing of the legend aimed at & succeeded in making Purim a popular festival, so that within 275 years after Esther was written, the feast of Purim was celebrated in all parts of the world.

Theyboon, who, in accordance with his theory that purde-
 gan (our Purim) was a nature feast, supposes that Eater
 = the sun, Mondchai = the moon, and Hama represents
 the winter, cannot be right when he suggests that this feast
 was celebrated on 5- five intercalary days which the Persians
 had to append to their year of 12 months of 30 days
 each in order to adjust their lunar year with the
 solar year of nature. For, says Kuenen, our solar
 year is approximately $365\frac{1}{4}$ days in length, so that
 the growth of a day of divergence each year between the
 Persian's solar & lunar calendar would make it impos-
 sible in course of 1460 years for purdegan to
 be celebrated at all seasons of the year. Hence purde-
 gan was not a new years festival celebrated because
 of the sun's & moon's triumph over winter. The festival
 could not have been of a cosmical nature.

Kuenen holds that Farvardin the name of the
 1st Persian month a faradigan (feast of the dead, cele-
 brated on the 5 intercalary days, which were later added to
 the 12th month instead of, as formerly, to the 8th) were
 connected as is the Persian Farvardian was known as far-

wardayan, (the name of the 5 intercalary days), because hymns + prayers to Feruero (the spirits of the dead) were recited. To this theory Lagarde objects saying that though the 5 intercalary days were placed at the end of the year, they were never counted as part of the 1st month called Farwardin.

The author says: "It is possible that the Persian Jews introduced Purim after a fortunate escape & that under pressure of similar persecutions escaped, it was adopted by foreign Jews."

The author though would make the festival Purim a feast adopted by the Jews because their deliverance came at the time of the heathen festival. It was for this reason that the Jews joined in the celebration, after a Jews coloring was given as to the nature & cause of the feast. He quotes the conduct of the Christian Church in accepting the heathen festival that fell in December - the Saturnalia - which they gave a Christian meaning. Prejudice & persecution had a great influence in spreading the observance of the national feast - Purim.

Purim according to some has no kernel of historical fact as its foundation. It is a festival built up on a legend, which aimed at rousing ^{springing} the passions of the populace when the Maccabees sadly missed the support of patriotic men. It was written when the circumstances suited & required the composition of such a work. The feast — a joyous festival — was intended to remind men of their duty of patriotism & inspired them to undertake desperate struggles by the assurance that God would no less protect them now than he had when his people was marked for slaughter in Persia three centuries before. Besides it was an age when the introduction of feasts was the fashion. Purim was then introduced as Maccabees' day and Chanuka were in the Maccabean times.

Prof. Reuss says that a "leader festival among Jews was given a historical aspect, origin, & origin & justification."

E. Meier identifies Persian behar (spring) with the word

717. Clarke suggests pari, meaning "any thing that happens"

fortunately," as did the date on which the Jews were to be slaughtered.

The fact that Purim is always celebrated as near the month of Nisan as is possible, as shown by the fact that the Feast of Purim is celebrated in the second month of Adar when the Jewish year is intercalated, seems to lend weight to the contention that it was originally a new year's festival or at least a spring festival. Purim is the only holiday whose date of celebration is or may be shifted.

סוף הדבר הכל נשמע: