

### III

#### THE CHRONICLER AND THE LEVITES

**A**N outstanding difference between the two accounts of the kingdom in Israel is the neglect of the levites by the earlier historian contrasted with the interest which the later writer showed in those officials. Whenever the earlier books referred to the cult, they spoke of its ministers as priests. Whenever the later book introduced the officials at the temple, it spoke of them as priests and levites: sometimes it even confined its attention to the levites and made no reference to the priests. So marked is this feature in C that it is no exaggeration to say that his interest in the levitical order is a characteristic of his history. This interest appears most prominently in his account of David's plans for the temple, of Solomon's erection of the building, and of the work of the reforming kings who restored the sanctuary and its cult. One evidence of the zeal for true religion on the part of these reformers was their care for the position of this body of the clergy.

Yet C never has anything to say about the origin of the men in whom he was so deeply interested. He took them and their position in the nation for granted in the same way as his predecessor took the priests and their functions for granted. He has, however, made two general statements about them which are of interest. The men were not only recognized as a class before David planned the temple, but they possessed a peculiar dignity in connexion with the cult. C made David explain the early failure in the transference of the ark by the fact that he had not entrusted the sacred emblem into their hands. They alone were capable of handling and carrying it; and this duty was a privilege, not a sign of inferior status like their task of carrying the tabernacle and its vessels according to the law in Numbers. To infringe their privilege was enough to defeat the earlier

attempt with the ark, and the success which attended the second effort vindicated their claim, and led David to frame a regulation on the subject.

The other general statement about the levites occurs in II Chr. 11: 13 ff. In his description of the apostasy of the northern kingdom under Jeroboam, C stated, as one result of the introduction of the calf-worship, that the levites in Israel forsook the polluted territory, even at some sacrifice to themselves, and took refuge in the purer south. This implies, not only that there were levites in Israel, but that the men fulfilled certain religious functions there. The author did not define exactly what these functions were. But he thought of them as being sacrificial in character, for he stated that Jeroboam and his sons drove the men out from executing the priest's office unto the Lord. Whatever the 'suburbs' which they sacrificed because of their loyalty may have been, these belonged to them in virtue of their office. According to C, therefore, levites existed in Israel before the temple existed, and fulfilled there priestly duties which were independent of the temple or the ark.

#### A. THE LEVITES AS SINGERS

Before entering on the general question of C's attitude to the levites, it may clear the air to examine a special matter which is related to it. The books of Chronicles contain a number of references to the musical side of the cult, and also refer to levites as those who were charged with the sacred song and its musical accompaniment. Because of this, and because of the comparative neglect of the subject in the books of Kings, it has become customary to conclude that the historian regarded this function as the peculiar duty and privilege of the entire levitical body, and it has been suggested that he may have been a member of one of the temple choirs. A scholar who has recently devoted attention to the matter finds himself able to write: 'One interest permeates the entire literature of the Chronicler, from the introduction in the first book of Chronicles down to the final

chapters of the book of Nehemiah. That is the interest in the function of the levites as singers and porters. This interest is the specific interest which the Chronicler has in the levites.<sup>1</sup> Vogelstein went further, for he found in this dominant feature of the book the motive which led to its composition. In his view the levites after the Return were relegated to merely menial duties about the temple, and the Chronicler's book represents an effort on the part of the levites to win a higher status through insisting on their functions as leaders of the sacred music.<sup>2</sup>

It may, then, be useful to collate the passages which refer to the musical service, to examine the relation of the levites to this part of the cult, and to test how far the facts justify either conclusion.

There are 24 allusions to the sacred music in that part of the books of Chronicles which is the subject of this study, if we include its use in war as well as in the temple-cult. Since war in old Israel was set under the divine direction, one may not wholly ignore the two military examples. They are as follows. When Abijah met the army of Israel, he told their king that, among its other advantages, Judah possessed the priests sounding the trumpets of alarm, and accordingly at the ensuing battle the priests sounded those trumpets, II. 13: 12-14. On the other hand, when Moab and Ammon came up against Jehoshaphat and were destroyed through divine intervention, the levites, on the morning of Judah's bloodless triumph, stood up to praise the Lord with a loud voice, II. 20: 19. Since these references to sacred music in connexion with war give an equal position to the priests and levites, they throw no light on our question.

The other instances occur in closer association with the cult. In five of these cases the language is quite general. When the ark was being brought up to Jerusalem, David and all Israel played before God with songs, harps, psalteries,

<sup>1</sup> Hänel: 'Das Recht der Opferschlachtung in der chronistischen Literatur', *ZAW* 1937, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Kampf zwischen Priestern und Leviten.*

timbrels, cymbals, and trumpets, I. 13: 8. When it arrived, all Israel brought it with shouting, with cornets, trumpets, cymbals, psalteries, and harps, I. 15: 28. On the occasion of Asa's covenant the people swore unto the Lord with shouting and with trumpets and cornets, II. 15: 14. After their deliverance from the threat of invasion by Moab and Ammon in the reign of Jehoshaphat the people came into the temple with psalteries, harps, and trumpets, II. 20: 28. When Athaliah found young Joash in the temple, all the people were rejoicing and blew with trumpets, the singers also played on instruments of music, II. 23: 13.<sup>1</sup> These passages throw no direct light on our question, for they contain no reference to the levites. They do, however, throw indirect light, since, even if it be supposed that the music was supplied by choirs, the fact remains that the historian did not use so excellent an opportunity for emphasizing that the choirs were composed of levites. If the connexion of the levites with the sacred music had been his 'specific interest', he would scarcely have failed to underline their part here.

There remain seventeen passages where the levites were definitely associated with the musical side of the cult. These may be divided into two classes. In the first class fall the cases where the singers and musicians were separated from the rest of their brethren, and constituted into a guild apart. Generally, the names of their leaders are given with or without the descent these men could claim from Levi. In one instance, only their numbers appear, but these are given relatively to the number of the larger body, so that again they constitute a guild apart. Thus, when the ark was transferred from the house of Obed Edom, David directed the chief of the levites to appoint their brethren the singers with musical instruments. The men so appointed were Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, I. 15: 16-24. After its arrival in the city the

<sup>1</sup> Only the last of these citations has any parallel in K: C quoted the first part of the triumph over the coronation of Joash from II Kings 11: 14.

king commissioned certain levites to minister before the ark and to celebrate and to give praise. Accordingly Asaph and his brethren, part of the singers who had been chosen by the chiefs, appear with their musical instruments, I. 16: 1-6. Since, however, the service before the ark was not purely choral, there were other levites who had carried the emblem, a body who served before it, and a group who acted as doorkeepers.<sup>1</sup> Again, at v. 7 David ordained to give thanks by Asaph and his brethren, and at vv. 37 ff. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun appear in that capacity.<sup>2</sup> Among the arrangements made by David for the future temple, there is mention of 4,000 levites who had the duty of offering praise with musical instruments, I. 23: 5. Nothing more is said about these men, but evidently they composed a small proportion of the whole body, which is said to have been composed of 34,000 individuals. These numbers may be exaggerated; but that does not affect the proportion between 4,000 singers and 30,000 other levites who were engaged in different duties. Among the temple personnel whose functions were determined at the same time appear certain of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, whom David set apart to prophesy with a musical accompaniment, I. 25: 1 ff. Their number, along with that of their brethren, only amounted to 288, v. 7. At the celebration of the passover under Josiah the singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their places according to the commandment of David, II. 35: 15, but the majority of the levites were in charge of the arrangements for the ceremony.

This final instance deserves special notice. Two bodies of levites appear: the one consisted of the larger number

<sup>1</sup> The fact that David was said to have decided on the 'certain levites' who served before the ark and who offered praise before it, though the singers had been already appointed to their task, is another indication that the service at the new shrine was not merely choral.

<sup>2</sup> The section is extremely confused and gives evidence of conflated readings, but, though it is impossible to disentangle the original with any confidence, the above conclusion remains unaffected.

who were appointed by the king to fulfil certain functions at the passover, the other is said to have been sons of Asaph who were entrusted with the musical service. The larger body were ordered to prepare the paschal victims for their brethren, the singers, who were so much engaged in their other duties that they could not do this for themselves. Kittel regarded the verse as an addition on the ground that it showed the Chronicler's bias in favour of the levitical singers. But this is to miss the real content of the remark. What the Chronicler was interested in was that the choral service was not intromitted, because the singers must prepare their paschal victims like every other householder. Its continuance was made possible, because the other levites undertook that duty for their brethren. Instead of regarding the levites as such to be singers, the verse makes a clear distinction between those who were singers and the larger number who were busy with other tasks.

There next fall to be considered the cases where we hear nothing of a guild of singers, but merely of levites or the levites conducting the musical service. They occur in the story of Solomon's dedication of the temple, II. 5: 11 ff., 7: 6, and among David's final charges, I. 23: 30; and they deserve special consideration, because of two features which they possess in common. On the one hand, they do not belong to the original C, but have been intruded into his narrative.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, they all occur in passages where the inferior status of the levites in relation to the priests was being insisted on by the annotator. At the dedication of the temple C made the levites carry in the ark and sacrifice before it. The annotator made the priests take it up and deposit it in the most holy place out of sight, and went on to add that the levitical singers were not permitted to advance beyond the east end of the altar. In both cases he was relegating the inferior clergy to their fitting place and to their lower functions. Similarly at II. 7: 6, the priests offered the sacrifices, while the attendant levites accom-

<sup>1</sup> For the proof see pp. 37 ff. and p. 85.

panied them with music. At I. 23: 27 ff. the relative status of priests and levites was defined by David, and there the office of the levites was to wait upon the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the Lord in the courts and in the chambers. Their task as musicians was merely one among the inferior duties which fell to their lot in this lower office. To stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise every even is merely one among the miscellaneous services which the men rendered to their superiors. In the same way, after the dedication of the temple, Solomon appointed the courses of the priests and the levites to their charges, to praise and to minister before the priests, II. 8: 14. Here, again, while the charge of the music was handed over to the men, it did not confer upon them any distinction. It was no more than one of the means by which they praised and ministered, not before the Lord, but before the priests.

Finally, there remain a number of instances which can be referred to the original C, and in which the language employed, as in the above later passages, is more general. In them we hear no more of Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, or of guilds of musicians, but of levites who conducted the psalmody. Thus, on the occasion of Hezekiah's dedication of the temple the king set the levites there with cymbals, psalteries, and harps after the commandment of David, II. 29: 25; he also ordered the levites to sing with the words of David and of Asaph the seer, v. 30. During the following festival of Unleavened Bread the levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day with loud instruments, II. 30: 21. After the dedication and the festival Hezekiah settled the courses of the priests and levites for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings to minister and to give thanks and to praise, II. 31: 2. When, again, Josiah restored the temple, there is mention of levites who were overseers of the work, and of others who could skill of musical instruments, II. 34: 12, while at v. 13 appear a third body who were scribes, officers, and door-keepers. In the last instance it will be noted that the levites who were musicians were only a part of the whole body.

In view of this synopsis of the facts, it is at least an exaggeration to say that the function of the levites as singers was the specific interest which the Chronicler took in the men. Clearly the historian was interested in the temple-music, as he was interested in everything which concerned the cult. His narrative expands whenever he touches on the ritual. We could have little realization of the place which music occupied in the sacrificial worship, but for what he has told. Yet it is also true that any knowledge we possess as to the existence and the ritual of a dedication service in Israel is derived from his account. He also has described the method in which passover was celebrated, after the locus of that rite was changed from the homes of the people to the sanctuary. Any conclusions as to the alteration in the ritual which followed on this change must be based on his description of passover under Hezekiah and Josiah. C's interest in the musical part of the service is only an evidence of his interest in the cult generally.

The same thing is true about his association of the levites with the music. He certainly connected these clergy with the sacred song, but, as will be pointed out later, he assigned to the men much wider and more important functions. Their duties as singers were only one part of the service which they rendered, and these are not put forward prominently, as their right to carry the ark is emphasized.

Further, attention must be given to the fact that, in his description of conditions in the time of David, C was more careful in his use of language, and never wrote of the levites having been singers or musicians. He wrote of the men who were chosen from the larger class, either by the king or by their own chiefs, to fulfil this duty, or he described them by the names of their leaders. Only when he was dealing with the service under the later kings did he use looser language, which might appear to imply that the levites, as such, were charged with that duty; and even there, in connexion with Josiah's passover, he reverted to the stricter language which he had employed at the beginning. This means that, where



he was dealing with the period when David determined the conditions which were to govern the future temple, he described the exact method by which the singers were decided; but, when he wrote about the later kings, he was content to say that these men restored the arrangements which had been made by David, and was not exact in his use of language on a minor feature of the service he described.

The attitude of the Chronicler in this matter can be readily understood, when it is seen in its historical setting. The developed musical service of the temple must have demanded a body of men who were possessed of a technical training. The lower duties about the sanctuary could be left to men who fulfilled them by rotation. When men were needed to act on any of the commissions of which there is mention under such kings as Jehoshaphat, those were chosen who had given proof of native ability or trained capacity. But a choral service which was a constant feature of the cult demanded a body of men who had received a special training for their duties. There had grown up, to answer this demand, the levitical guilds or choirs, and what the Chronicler did was to carry back this arrangement of his own time, and place it, as he placed so much else, under the authority of David.<sup>1</sup>

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## B. THE LEVITES AND THE ARK

There are certain other functions which the Chronicler attributed to the levites. The first of these which must be considered at some length was the right to carry the ark. In C's view they alone were capable of fulfilling this duty, which was not so much a task laid upon them as a privilege and an honour. When the author of Samuel recorded the successful transference of the ark, he merely stated that on this occasion the emblem was carried, as though by this means the stumble of the oxen which resulted in Uzzah's death was avoided. C, on the other hand, made David explain the earlier failure by the fact that the levites had not been the porters, and that thus the ordinance had not been observed. In this connexion we never hear of a guild who acted as porters of the ark: the privilege belonged to all the members of the tribe of Levi.

Accordingly, certain levites were selected to act as porters, and, as soon as the ark was deposited in the sanctuary which David had made ready for its reception, certain others were appointed to minister to it and to take charge of the choral service there. These last were members of the levitical sept who controlled the music. A regular cult was thus instituted in the sanctuary which David had erected in the capital he had won for his nation. The description of these events, which extends from I. 15: 4 to 16: 42 has not been left in its original form, but has been revised and considerably adapted, so that it must be examined in the hope that it may be possible to distinguish the elements of which it is composed.

higher authority, for the men held office in the tabernacle and were under a *mishpat* there. It is as though the writer had taken the occasion to develop the note of the annotator at I. 16: 39-42, who introduced the cult practised in the tabernacle at Gibeon into the story of David's institution of the cult before the ark. That tabernacle had been equipped with all the elements required for worship, for it possessed not only levitical singers, but levitical servitors. These last are described in terms which appear in the law of Exodus and Numbers: they were *n'thoonim*, given to the community, or given to the priests.

The passage begins by stating that David convened all Israel to take part in the solemn function, and continues with the further statement that he brought together the sons of Aaron and the levites, 15: 4-10. Here, already, it is remarkable that, while the sons of Aaron are left undefined as to their numbers or their classes, the levites are said to have comprised 872 men under 6 leaders.<sup>1</sup>

The king then summoned the leaders of these two bodies of clergy to receive instructions about the order of proceedings, and to make arrangements for the great event, v. 11 f. The leaders were Zadok and Abiathar on the part of the priests, and the six already mentioned chiefs on the part of the levites. But the mention of the priests, and especially of these two priests, is peculiarly unsuitable. For, when the king addressed the men he had summoned, he called them the heads of fathers' houses of the levites. Such a form of address was inappropriate for any priests, above all inappropriate in the case of Zadok, who at 12: 28 is called a נַעַר or youth. The word cannot be pressed too far, as though it necessarily implied one who had not yet reached manhood; but, when it is used in a wider sense than that of a youth, it is employed of one who was a subordinate. It could not well appear as the title of a leading priest, or of the head of a father's house. For these reasons I agree with Rothstein in regarding 'the priests' as an addition in vv. 4 and 11. The reviser found it intolerable to suppose that David passed over the higher clergy on such an occasion, the more intolerable because sacrifices were offered before the ark at the first stage of its journey, and to him sacrifices could only be offered by priests. He may even have been offended by the neglect of the Mosaic legislation which forbade the levites to handle any of the furniture of

<sup>1</sup> At v. 4 LXX<sup>B</sup> offers a very peculiar rendering, for it omits the *waw*, and reads 'the sons of Aaron the levites'. Such an expression, the levitical sons of Aaron, is unexampled, and its appearance at least suggests as the original the priests the levites, i.e. the levitical priests, a reading which is familiar elsewhere.

the tabernacle, including the ark, until the priests had wrapped up those sacred articles, cf. Num. 4: 15.

In its original form, therefore, the Chronicler's narrative made no reference here to the priests. When David resolved to bring the ark up to its new sanctuary, he summoned the levites for the purpose, and he issued instructions to these men as to their duties on the occasion. To notice, however, that the men needed such instructions and that they received these from the king suggests at least that the situation was unprecedented, and that neither king nor clergy had any accustomed rule to guide them. This compels us to look back and examine more closely the statement in v. 2 which inaugurated the whole movement. In R.V. this reads: 'none ought to carry the ark of God but the levites, for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God and to minister unto Him.' This has generally been taken to mean that David was careful to comply with the letter of the law as to the transport of the ark. For the terms of that law Rothstein and Benzinger have referred to Num. 1: 48-50, 3: 5 ff., 4: 15, 7: 9, 10: 17. But these passages deal with the general question of the transport of the tabernacle and its furniture, and entrust that duty to the levites. None of them even mentions the ark, and one of them, 4: 15, forbids these clergy to touch any of the sacred articles, reserving this function to the priests. Now, if that law was the basis of David's action here, how could the ark be lifted at all, since only the priests might handle it? Further, if the *mishpat* which was followed was so old and so familiar, why did the men need careful instructions from the king in the method by which they were to carry out their duties?

The conclusion to which these facts lead is that v. 2 contains the promulgation of the rules which were to control the function, and that these rules were issued by the king.  $\text{וַיִּצְוֶה דָּוִד} \text{ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל} \text{ וְלֵוִי} \text{ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל}$  is the formal opening; then David decreed. The decree concerned the duties of the levites in relation to the ark, both on its journey and in its new sanctuary, and accordingly the king summoned the men into

his presence. It also divided itself into two parts, of which the first was that only the levites were allowed to act as porters. Therefore he instructed the leading levites to make such arrangements as might meet and satisfy the new *mishpat*. But the more permanent part of the decree was that the Lord had commanded the levites not only to carry the ark but to minister unto it, not unto Him, for ever. Two considerations make it clear that this ministry was directed not unto God but unto the ark. On the one hand, if we follow Rothstein and suppose that here David was carrying out the regulations of the Mosaic period, he applied to the lower clergy a description of their office which is carefully avoided in that law. The Mosaic law called the levites ministers of the priests, ministers of the community, or ministers of the tabernacle; but it reserved the title of divine ministers to the priests. On the other hand, the interpretation offered above links up directly with the statement in 16: 4 that, as soon as it had reached its sanctuary, David appointed certain levites to minister unto the ark of God. He had provided for the first task of the transport: he now provided for the higher and more permanent duty of the cult. In connexion with both, he further took care for the provision of a choral service, and the conduct of that service was not entrusted to the levites as such, but to the trained guilds.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have mentioned some of the positive reasons which point to the cult that was practised before the ark having consisted in more than a choral service. It may be legitimate to add here the negative criticism of the opposite opinion. The language used admits of a difference of judgement on the subject, for David is said to have appointed certain levites *וְלִהְיוּתוּ וְלִהְיוּתוּ וְלִהְיוּתוּ*. Kittel, who limited the service to one of praise, was obliged to omit *waw* before the first verb without any authority from the text or from the versions. He then explained that the three verbs defined the preceding participle: the service of the levites consisted in celebrating and thanking and praising, where the three participles are mere variants. But it remains more than doubtful whether *וְלִהְיוּתוּ*, to celebrate, can be used in this general sense. The word appears in the headings of Psalms 38 and 70 in a technical direction,

Thus the initiative throughout was taken by the king. Such interference by the secular authority in matters which concerned the cult would have appeared intolerable to the later Judaism. To C, however, David was no ordinary king, for it was under divine direction that he planned the temple and laid down the lines of the worship there. While he did not actually build the house, he set up the sanctuary which preceded it, and in that first sanctuary at Jerusalem he was careful to include what remained permanent in the cult of Israel. Two things were essential to that worship, the ark, and the ministers who served it, the levites.

Accordingly it is natural to find that, when David committed the plans for the temple, which took the place of the tent at the old shrine, into the hands of Solomon and the leaders of the community, he charged them to transfer the ark and its sacred vessels to the new sanctuary, I. 22: 19. What follows that injunction was concerned with the levites, the age at which they entered on office, their courses and their duties. Again, C's account of the dedication of the temple related that the levites brought the ark into the new building and offered sacrifice before it. Thereupon the glory of the Lord filled the house, for the sanctuary was accepted, when it was built before an altar, the site of which had been indicated by a theophany, and when it contained

which is more naturally understood to refer to the use of the two psalms in connexion with a particular ritual. It differs very markedly from similar technical headings to other psalms, which refer to the musical accompaniment. This explanation is strengthened by the use of the word in Isa. 66: 3, where the verb is coupled with incense, and cannot mean anything else except some form of sacrifice. The root, again, appears in the אִזְכָּרָה, which was definitely a sacrificial term, cf. Lev. 2: 2, 9, 16; 5: 12; 6: 8; Num. 5: 26.

It has been necessary to add this note, because I cannot dispose of the question of this service before the ark by the easy method of saying that in early Israel a cult, which consisted of no more than a service of praise, was inconceivable. We are not dealing with primitive usage, but with the ideas of the Chronicler on the worship he ascribed to David.



the ark and the servitors whom David had appointed,<sup>1</sup> II. 5: 2-6.

Temple, ark, and levites appear in combination for the last time in the preface with which C introduced his account of Josiah's passover, II. 35: 1-4. The king addressed the levites as to their duties at the approaching celebration, calling them the teachers of all Israel and holy unto the Lord. In itself it is remarkable that he should have described the men at all, but still more remarkable are the terms which he applied to them. Both expressions magnify their office in language which has no direct relation to the passover, and both assign to them a dignity which the later law reserved to the priests. Only the Deuteronomic law, the Chronicler in his accounts of Jehoshaphat's reform, and the author of Neh. 8: 7-9<sup>2</sup> entrusted the teaching of the law to the levites. Again, the men are said to be holy unto the Lord here and at II. 23: 6: in the later law this dignity was reserved to the priests.<sup>3</sup>

Josiah then bade the men who were thus qualified for their task to put the holy ark into the house which Solomon the son of David did build, there shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders. The command is difficult to interpret, and has given rise to considerable discussion as well as to some far-reaching conclusions. The first difficulty is to explain why it was necessary to issue any order about depositing in the temple an emblem which had been brought into it at the time of its dedication. The second is to see why the temple was said to have been built by Solomon the son of David, as though there were any other. Any explanation, which is to be entirely satisfactory, must meet and answer both questions. Benzinger proposed to meet the first difficulty by reading וַיִּבְנֶה instead of וַיִּבְנֶה, which gave him the reading 'behold the holy ark is in the temple'; but he does not appear even to have recognized the second. Kittel,

<sup>1</sup> For the analysis of the passage, cf. pp. 37 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the discussion of this passage in my *Post-Exilic Judaism*, pp. 262 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *HDB*. iv. 93.

again, in *B.H.* has suggested  $\text{תָּהָרָה}$  for  $\text{תָּהָרָה}$ , which may be translated 'the holy ark is at rest' in the temple, for which he compared I. 28: 2. The clause gives bad Hebrew, but not much worse than C wrote elsewhere. A third suggestion may be ventured based on a LXX rendering which appears in I Esdras. The Greek  $\epsilon\nu\ \tau\eta\ \theta\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\epsilon\iota$  may answer to  $\text{תָּהָרָה}$  in place of  $\text{וְהָרָה}$  or  $\text{תָּהָרָה}$ , and the clause might then read: 'since the holy ark was deposited in Solomon's temple, there has been no further occasion for it to be carried.' Either this rendering or that proposed by Kittel explains why the temple is called 'the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build'. The writer was referring to the dedication service which, since its central feature was the deposition of the ark, exempted the levites from any further need to act as its porters. Whether, however, either emendation is accepted or the present text is retained, there remains an insistence on the sacred character of the ark, on its continued presence in the temple, and on the connexion of the levites with it. The retention of the present text lays emphasis on the privilege of the levites as its porters.

'Now,' continued the king, 'serve the Lord your God and His people Israel, and prepare yourselves after your fathers' houses by your courses according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son.' Since their privilege of acting as porters to the ark had come to an end, the levites were free to undertake new duties. These functions involved higher responsibilities, for they were to serve the Lord and His people Israel. But, according to the later law, it was the priests who were privileged to serve the Lord and the people: the function of the levites was to serve the priests. For proof of this it is only necessary to refer to the passage which described the investment of the levites in their office: 'the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may minister unto him', Num. 3: 5 f.

This procedure on Josiah's part is described immediately

before the celebration of the passover, but it has a wider, more general reference than merely to that event. The king aimed at restoring the conditions which had prevailed in the temple when it was built. Hence he dwelt on the fact that the ark had been there since the time of Solomon. But that emblem had no connexion with the festival of passover. Again he bade the levites prepare themselves in their courses according to the directions of David. Yet any such instructions could offer no guidance for the men's conduct at a passover which had not been kept by any of the kings of Israel. Again, the description of the levites as the teachers of all Israel had no connexion with the duties they were required to perform at the festival. Thus the introductory verses, while they immediately precede the description of Josiah's passover, describe arrangements which were not confined to that event, and were not designed merely to prepare for it. They form a species of preface which defined certain permanent arrangements that were made by the reforming king.

That this was the case becomes clearer when we compare the statement of the Chronicler with another passage which, though distant in date, is very similar in substance, I. 23: 24 ff. The passage occurs in the long description of the instructions David gave to his successor, and forms the conclusion of a section which bears on the duties and the courses of the levites. The chapter is plainly not homogeneous, but derives from at least two authors: and the conclusion with which we are concerned here has been introduced by a reviser.<sup>1</sup> This writer began by describing the levites in long, somewhat cumbrous phrases, which are reminiscent of similar language on the same subject in the Book of Numbers,<sup>2</sup> but he omitted all reference to their division into classes, which was the subject of the preceding paragraph. Instead of this, he stated that from this period in the national history one duty which had devolved on the levites had

<sup>1</sup> For the proof of this statement, cf. p. 85 f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Num. 1: 2, &c.

come to an end. Since God had given Israel rest, and since He Himself had taken up His abode in Jerusalem, there was no further need for them to carry the tabernacle and its vessels.<sup>1</sup> Henceforth their duties were concerned with the temple and its cult, and, while their status was alongside the priests, it was definitely subordinate to that of the higher clergy.<sup>2</sup> To them also was committed all responsibility for the choral service, but here, as at II. 5:12, this charge occurs in a passage which dwelt, not on the dignity, but on the inferiority of the levites. As for their share in the sacrifices, it was carefully limited. Everything which they performed there must be כַּמִּשְׁפֵּט עֲלֵיהֶם, within the regulations which were laid down for them, or according to the prevailing use. Finally, their function in general was to serve the tabernacle and the holy place and the sons of Aaron their brethren.

These directions are so closely parallel to the paragraph which has been reviewed that it is impossible to deny some relation between them. And that relation can only be that the words put into the mouth of David were intended, not to supplement, but to correct the utterances of Josiah, and to counteract their dangerous implications. The reviser could not, in this case, appeal to the authority of the Mosaic legislation, as he did elsewhere. He employed the same method to which he had recourse in attempting to reconcile the divergence between the 30 years of v. 3 and the 20 years of v. 24 at which the levites entered on office, and called his addition David's last words. The final decision of the king, v. 27, had been for 20 years of age, and his final decision on the status of the levites had been as it was defined in the law. When Josiah referred the levites to the writings of David and Solomon, it must be understood that he meant the last message of the great king.

The comparison of these two crucial passages has revealed the same double strand in the Chronicler's narrative which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Num. 3: 7 ff. and chap. 4.

<sup>2</sup> The details given about those duties, as Rothstein has pointed out, are based on Lev. c. 2.

became apparent in the study of David's relation to the temple. To C the temple took the place of the tent which housed the ark, and the ark itself was the central and essential feature in both tent and temple. Therefore, also, the levites, whom David appointed to serve the ark in its tent, held a leading place in the cult of the temple. The reviser, on the other hand, regarded the temple as having taken the place of the tabernacle. The leading feature of the cult at the tabernacle was its altar, at which the priests were alone competent to offer sacrifice. Therefore these priests held complete authority over the cult, where they served the Lord and Israel, while the levites in turn served them. As for the ark, it had been merely part of the furniture of the tabernacle, and it occupied no higher position in the temple. It was relegated to obscurity in the inner shrine, and any sanctity it possessed or reverence it could claim was not inherent in itself, but was due to the fact of its containing the tablets of the law.

### C. OTHER FUNCTIONS ASSIGNED TO THE LEVITES

The responsibility of the levites for the choral service and their relation to the ark did not exhaust the Chronicler's interest in this body of the clergy. He regarded, as falling within their competence, certain other duties which differ in character from those which have been passed in review. The choral service and the ministry of the ark were directly connected with the cult and were confined by C to the levites. The functions, which must now be detailed, extended beyond the temple and brought the men into contact with other sides of the national life. They were also not confined to the levites, but were shared with other members of the community.

C credited his reforming kings with an interest in the welfare of their nation, which was not confined to fostering the worship in the temple. From him we hear of the appointment of certain royal commissions which were charged with the duty of improving conditions in the kingdom. In all of

these levites took a part, sometimes a leading part. The first mention of such a commission is also in some respects the most remarkable. Jehoshaphat is said to have appointed five princes, nine levites, and two priests to teach in Judah, having the book of the law of the Lord with them, II. 17: 7-9. In his note on the passage Kittel was almost entirely concerned with the historical question as to whether it was possible to suppose that a book of the law existed at that early date, but he did draw attention to the feature that a commission charged with such a duty was said to have contained a large proportion of laymen.

Since our inquiry is not concerned with the historical question, what concerns us most in the statement is the composition of the royal commission. The levites were not only entrusted with the task of teaching the law—there are other passages which assign that duty to them—but they constituted the majority on a body of men, to whom the duty was assigned. The same king is credited by C with having initiated measures in the direction of improving the administration of justice in his kingdom. One part of that reform consisted in the appointment of a high court of appeal at Jerusalem, II. 19: 5 ff. Here Kittel has proposed a slight emendation of the text at the close of v. 8, which gives sense to an otherwise meaningless sentence. The MT reads לְמִשְׁפַּט יְהוָה וְלִרְיָב וְיָשְׁבוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם, which makes the king set up the court in Jerusalem 'for the judgement of the Lord and for controversies. And they returned to Jerusalem'. As, however, the court was to have its seat in the city, the last sentence offers no sense. Kittel reads for the last five words לְמִשְׁפַּטִּי or לְמִשְׁפַּט יְהוָה וְלִרְיָבִי יָשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם, and makes them define the scope of the new court. It was set up in the capital in order to deal with the religious affairs of the general community and with the secular concerns of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This supreme court was to consist of Levites, priests, and heads of fathers' houses in *Israel*. When it dealt with the religious questions which were referred to it, its president was to be the high-priest: when royal affairs were

under consideration, it was presided over by the prince of the house of *Israel*. The שֹׁטְרִים or executive officers were again levites. Thus the levites fulfilled a double function in the court of final instance. They constituted the officials who were charged with carrying out its decisions, but they also formed part of the court itself; and, when they appear in the latter capacity, they are again mentioned first. The significance of the functions which are ascribed to the men can only be fully recognized when the passages which describe Jehoshaphat's commission for teaching the law and his institution of a supreme court are thus set together. C claimed that the levites were competent to instruct the people in the divine law, and to sit on the court of appeal which decided on cases which dealt with that law.

It is no concern of the present study to attempt to decide on the historical accuracy of the measures of reform which are here ascribed to Jehoshaphat. The fact that he made the court consist in part of heads of fathers' houses in Israel, and that he called its president in certain cases the prince of the house of Israel, may be held to suggest that C forgot that he was describing action taken by a king of Judah. He may, therefore, have been dealing with conditions which emerged and arrangements which were made during the period after the Return. But, if that be held to be the situation, it only makes the attitude he took more remarkable. For then, at a time when the levites were being relegated to a definitely subordinate status, he described these lower clergy as fully competent to teach and to administer the divine law.<sup>1</sup>

In connexion with the repairs in the temple, which were carried out by Joash, our two sources differ so widely that

<sup>1</sup> Benzinger held that the visitation described in these verses was the same as that already described in 17: 7-9. But the appointment of judges throughout the Judean towns is not parallel to that of a commission whose business it was to teach the divine law in the kingdom. The court set up in the capital had nothing to do with the teaching of the law: it had to deal with the way in which that law was observed. Nor did Benzinger explain why, if the case was as he supposed, the account was duplicated.

the account in *Chronicles* amounts to a complete recasting of that in *Kings*.<sup>1</sup> What concerns us here is that, according to C, the money devoted to the purpose was brought for royal inspection through or under the hand of the levites. They were made responsible for the supervision of the collection. Again, in preparation for the rededication of the temple after its desecration by Ahaz, Hezekiah summoned the priests and levites into one of the city plazas. The king, however, only addressed the levites, and in his charge to them bade them not to be negligent because the Lord had chosen them to stand before Him, to minister unto Him, and that they should be His ministers and burn incense, II. 29: 3-11. The functions here ascribed to the men are described in terms which were reserved to the priests in the later law. It is accordingly remarkable, if not suspicious, to find that v. 16, which describes the fulfilment of the royal command, declares that it was carried out by the priests to whom Hezekiah gave no charge on the subject.<sup>2</sup> Hezekiah, further, made arrangements for the support of the temple clergy, ordering the people who lived in Jerusalem to make provision for the priests and the levites in order that they might be free to devote themselves to the divine law, II. 31: 4. The two classes of officials were thus placed on an equal footing, alike in relation to their claim for support and in the duties which they were to be left free to fulfil. The king also ordered rooms to be prepared for storing these offerings, and entrusted the care of these to the levites, v. 11. Finally, when Josiah restored the temple he committed the task of collecting the necessary funds to the same men, who supervised as well the work and the workmen, II. 34: 9.

In all these cases the Chronicler was dealing with the work of kings who were reformers and who were commended by him as such; and all of them gave peculiar prominence to the levites as assistants in the aims they had

<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of II Chr. 24: 4-16, cf. p. 78 f.

<sup>2</sup> For a full examination of the passage cf. the chapter on Hezekiah's Reform.



at heart. They were more numerous than the priests on the commission which Jehoshaphat appointed to teach the divine law, and they held a position of equal authority on the final court of appeal which dealt with the administration of the law. They were given the leading part at the purification and rededication of the temple by Hezekiah. Under the same king they had a share in the collection of the dues devoted to the maintenance of the temple clergy, they benefited along with the priests from this provision, and to them was committed the responsibility for supervising and distributing the offerings after they had been collected. Josiah continued the last practice and committed to the men the collection of the funds for the restoration of the temple and the supervision of their expenditure.

In a number of instances the levites were associated with the priests in these duties and benefits, but, except that the high-priest presided over the supreme court at Jerusalem in religious issues, there is no hint that they were subordinate to their brethren. Since, however, the functions which have formed the subject of our last section are concerned with matters not directly connected with the cult, it might be possible to conclude that C confined his view of the equality of the two orders to everything which did not touch the actual cult. But there remain three clear indications that he made the equality absolute. Before the dedication of the temple, he put into the mouth of Hezekiah an exhortation in which the king bade the levites be diligent because they were the elect of God, to stand before Him, to minister unto Him, to be His ministers and to burn incense, II. 29: 11. After the passover and festival of unleavened bread under the same king he stated that the priests the levites arose and blessed the people, II. 30: 27. He made Josiah give instructions to the levites that now they were to serve the Lord their God and His people Israel, II. 35: 3. These are titles and functions which the later law reserved to the priests.

## EXCURSUS ON II Chr. 24: 4-14

This passage, which describes the arrangements made by Joash for the repair of the temple, has a parallel in II Kings 12: 5-17; but, while the Chronicler used the earlier narrative, he did not so much follow as entirely recast it.<sup>1</sup> According to K, the king instituted measures for the repairs without any reference to the damage which the sanctuary or its furniture had sustained at the hands of Athaliah. If we possessed only K's account, it would be natural to conclude that Joash had in view some permanent arrangement for maintaining the sacred building, by setting apart certain revenues which accrued to it, in order to defray the necessary expenses for its repair. Whether his motive was to relieve the royal exchequer or to make sure that the condition of the temple was not dependent on the whim of the king, must remain uncertain. The exact source of these funds is far from clear, for v. 5, in which they are defined, has the appearance of being conflate: but they were plainly not new charges, imposed upon the worshippers for the first time. They had been paid into the temple treasury before the time of Joash, and were now to be diverted to serve a special purpose. It is, accordingly, possible that Kittel's suggestion is correct, and that the money from these consecrated things and from voluntary offerings was part of the permanent revenue of the temple-priesthood. What Joash proposed, on that view, was that these funds should henceforth meet the expenses of the temple repairs, as well as help to meet the needs of the priests. The royal proposal came to nothing because of the successful resistance of the clerical order. The exact way in which the men defeated this attack on their rights is not clear. They may simply have refused to surrender their claim to the offerings, or they may have declined to accept any of this money from the worshippers, either for themselves or for the repairs, and so have brought matters to a deadlock. At least it was only after the failure of his first proposal that Joash was forced to have recourse to another method. He set up an offertory-box beside the altar inside the temple and appealed directly to the laity. When the box was full the king's secretary and the chief-priest took charge of the money and distributed it for the purpose for which it had been given.

C, on the other hand, began by the statement that the need for repairs was due to the damage which Athaliah had done to the temple, its fabric and its furniture. Accordingly he omitted all reference to the royal proposal to charge the cost of the repairs on

<sup>1</sup> Kittel's note is here of peculiar value.

the ordinary revenues of the sanctuary, and he was equally silent about the resistance of the priests in the matter. Since the necessity was due to a temporary cause, it could be met by a contribution *ad hoc*. Joash met the situation by a direct appeal to the worshippers, and, after due proclamation of his purpose, set up the offertory-box. Since, however, the laity were no longer admitted within the precincts of the temple, C was careful to state that the box was set up outside. When it was full it was brought in by the levites and emptied by the king's scribe and the high-priest's officer.

This original account of C has been supplemented by an annotator, who added vv. 5 and 6. That the verses are an addition is plain from several indications. Thus they break the close connexion between v. 4 and v. 7. Verse 7 begins 'for Athaliah, the miscreant, had wrecked the temple', and thus explains why Joash in v. 4 'was minded to restore the house of the Lord'. The statement has no connexion with the royal question to the high-priest in v. 6 about the delay in the collection of the levy. Further, the intruded verses relate the appointment of a royal commission to raise a levy for the temple repairs in the towns of Judah. The substance of this, except for one addition, is repeated in v. 9. There, after the offertory-box had been set up at the temple-gate, Joash issued a proclamation to explain its purpose. The purpose is stated to have been to receive the assessed tax which was due for the temple from every Israelite. What, then, had become of the commission which was charged with the collection of this assessment? Were they simply dissolved because some of their number, the levites, had been slow in the performance of their duty? In that case the offertory-box was something to which Joash resorted when his commissioners failed to perform their task. Yet it becomes difficult to explain why one body of these men showed themselves thus reluctant. In Kings the author was careful to state that Joash's final expedient was due to reluctance on the part of the priests, and even suggested a cause for their unwillingness. No reason is even offered for the slowness of the levites.

The presence of a later hand is generally acknowledged here, and the reason for his interference has been explained by his desire to exonerate the priesthood from the slur which was cast upon them in K's account. But it must always appear a very curious procedure on the part of an annotator that he left untouched the original document, in which the slur appeared, and added a note to another document which contained no hint of any aspersion on the conduct of the priests. It is much more probable that the writer wished to supplement the narrative in C. The young and

pious king, who was guided by the high-priest in his early life, could not have ignored the Mosaic practice in any measures he took for the restoration of the temple. He had revived the levy which Moses laid upon the people in the wilderness when he set up and equipped the tabernacle, Exod. 30: 11-16, 38: 25 f.; and, when he set up the offertory-box it was to receive, not the voluntary gifts of the faithful, but the assessment from the people, which was to 'be a memorial for the children of Israel before the Lord, to make atonement for their souls'. At the same time as the annotator thus made Joash act in obedience to the Mosaic law, he was able to insist on his favourite theme, that the temple had taken the place of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

There is a minor point of difference between the two accounts, which amounts to a direct contradiction. While K stated that the money collected was enough to meet the cost of the repairs, he added that none of it was employed to provide for sacred vessels. The contributions were reserved for the one end which had been in view from the beginning. The remark tallies with Kittel's view that in Kings Joash was aiming at the provision of a permanent means of providing a fund for the maintenance of the temple fabric. It was not intended to cover any charges for the renewal of the sacred vessels. On the other hand, the passage in Chronicles states definitely that, 'when they had made an end, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the Lord', v. 14a. The statement is more than awkward in its present position; for it follows the remark that the king and the high-priest distributed the money from the box to the workmen who were engaged in the repairs, and that these men had completed their task, so that the sanctuary was set up in its state. When the work was done they offered burnt-offerings there continually all the days of Jehoiada, v. 14b. There is no hint of any surplus which could be spent on the provision of sacred vessels. Again, it is natural to recognize the hand of the annotator, who was making the incident conform to the account in Exodus; for the assessment which Moses levied on the people in the wilderness had defrayed the cost of the furniture in the tabernacle as well as that of its fabric. He found the point of attachment for his addition in the earlier statement of C, according to which, in the time of Athaliah, the temple had been wrecked and its sacred vessels had been devoted to the service of the baal sanctuary. These were not worthy to be used again in the temple.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This direct contradiction between the two sources is explained differently and very ingeniously by Bertheau.