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## ARTICLE V.

THE BOOK, THE LAND, THE PEOPLE; OR,  
DIVINE REVELATIONS THROUGH  
ANCIENT ISRAEL.<sup>1</sup>

BY PROFESSOR SAMUEL IVES CURTISS, D.D.

THE student of the Bible may take either of two main attitudes with respect to it; one of loyal acceptance of the views of past generations with regard to its origin and composition, and of loving reception of its teachings as they have been interpreted by our fathers; the other of critical study of the book, not only of its contents, but also of the claim that it has upon us as an authority over our hopes and our lives. The theological student is called upon to attempt the latter, both for his own sake and that of others. By virtue of the themes which will be more or less the subjects of his thinking in his ministry he will be summoned, whether he will or not, to examine the foundations of his faith; and he will be sure to find some in his congregation who will question him regarding the current criticism of the Scriptures.

The theological seminary offers the safest place for the examination of these subjects. In this field the student needs the sympathetic instruction of those who have long been engaged in a critical study of the Scriptures. Specialists in any department of knowledge should be far more familiar with it than those who merely have a general acquaintance with the subject. The church should not

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered in the Union Park Congregational Church at the opening of the Forty-third year of the Chicago Theological Seminary, October 4, 1900. The Seminary year began on Wednesday of the preceding week.

doubt the sincerity of her scholars, simply because the views they present are not those of the traditional school. None who in their thinking, or the result of their investigations, have deviated from the old lines have ever been able to escape the charge of heterodoxy.<sup>1</sup> Taylor, Stuart, Park, in their day were denounced by some as unsound in the faith.<sup>2</sup> The church has indeed a right to be sensitive regarding the instruction of those who are to be her ministers, but she should not be unreasonable.

Nor should the student in the delicate and difficult work in which he is to engage be too free in charging any of his professors with undermining his faith. During all the history of seminary instruction there have been men who have believed they were in peril from the teaching of some professor. This has been especially true in those departments where the current views about the Bible have been shown to be erroneous. There was a time when some of the most learned believed that the Hebrew vowel-points were a part of the original revelation to Moses. It was demonstrated that certain combinations of the Hebrew consonants could be read in many ways, and from this it was argued *a priori* that the vowel-points must have been revealed to Moses. For years the discussion raged, learned volumes were written, the peace of the church was disturbed. But it was proved beyond a peradventure that the massoretic system of punctuation arose subsequently to the time of Jerome (346-420). When the question was once settled, it could no longer be deemed vital. No harm came from this proved fact.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This was true of Jerome. He was called a *falsarius, sacrelegus* and *corruptor Sanctarum Scripturarum*. See Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi . . . Opera (ed., Valarsius, Veronae, MDCCXXXIV), Tom. i. col. 305; Tom. v. col. 387, etc.

<sup>2</sup>I can well remember, when I was about to choose a seminary in 1867, that I was advised not to go to Andover, on account of the "heretical teachings" of Professor Park.

<sup>3</sup>Schnedermann, *Der christliche Glaube und die heilige Schrift* (Basel,

It is natural enough that many a student finds himself summoned to examine the foundations of our faith in a way which seems, at first, to imperil the entire structure. This fear comes from confounding certain cherished beliefs about the Bible with the teachings of the Bible itself. To relinquish these opinions about the Bible seems equivalent to relinquishing the Bible, and all critical studies about

1834), pp. 36, 37: "Darüber kam die evangelische Theologie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts zum grössten Theil in schwere Bedrängniß, absonderlich die reformirte, aber auch die lutherische. Die Mächte des Abgrunds schienen ihr losgelassen und zu toben wider den Herrn und seinen Christ. In heller Angst warf sie Schanzen über Schanzen auf. . . Angstvoll wandten sich gläubige Christen an Buxtorf, den Vater und den Sohn, nach Basel. Die zögerten lange; dann erscheinen umfangreiche Bücher des Sohns, in welchen dieser mit halbem Herzen den velorenen Posten verteidigte. Freudig setzten nun die Schweizer Kirchen 1675 das Bekenntniss auf, die Punkte seien alt."

The following statement from a large folio by Cappellus in an edition prepared by his son indicates his position with respect to the vowel-points as well as that of his opponents—Ludovici Cappelli Commentarii et Notæ Criticæ in Vetus Testamentum, (Amstelodami, MDCLXXXIX), p. 702: "Ex his omnibus liquido patet, 1. Puncta ista hodierna nec ab Adamo, nec a Mose, aut Prophetis, esse ante captivatatem Babylonicum usurpata in Scriptis suis. 2. Nec post reditum a captivatate, ab Esdra, aut alio, fuisse ante absolutum Talmud excogitata, sed a viris quibusdam Jndæis Sapientibus, post 500, a Christo nato annum fuisse inventa."

On the other hand, the position of John Buxtorf, Jr., is seen in his quarto volume, entitled *Anticritica* (Basileæ, 1653), p. 9: "Sic ergo in ea quam caeperam tela pertexenda pergens, *Quaestionem etiam Secundam, de Punctorum Vocalium et Accentum Hebraicorum Origine et Antiquitate*, peculiari Tractatu, pro gratia mihi a Domino concessa, ita pertractavi, ut ostenderim, in hac etiam quaestione Hebraeos omnes, tam Veteres, quam Recentiores, pro Punctorum Hebraicorum Antiquitate stare et militare, et vel eorum Originem ad Mosen, et Authores Sacrorum librorum ipsos; vel saltem ad Esdram, eorum inventionem, te ad libros Sacros adscriptionem, referre; uno excepto Elia [Levita], recenti Hebraeorum Grammatico, qui superiori saeculo floruit. Cum Hebraeis ergo et ego, Sententiam de Antiqua et authentica origine praeferens." Cf. Hottinger in his *Thesaurus Philologicus* (Tiguri, MDCLIX), p. 401: "Alii puncta vocant, Traditionem Mosis e monte Sinai; ita quidem, ut juxta quosdam, Moses punctorum figuras non modo a Deo acceperit, sed et scribendo expresserit; juxta alios vero orali tantum traditione ad tempora Esrae propagavit qui primus illas scribendo expresserit."

the origin and composition of the Scriptures may seem to be unprofitable and unedifying. It is certain, however, that people are making more inquiries regarding the Bible than in respect to any other book. The minister may meet such inquiries with the statement, that, as Christianity has demonstrated its divine power and origin, these difficulties regarding a divine revelation, admitting that they exist, need give no occasion for anxiety, and hence no effort need be made to explain them. This, I say, is a position which every minister may take, because it is true that the divine origin and power of Christianity cannot be impeached by a consideration of any difficulties in Scripture. As teachers of the people we can frankly admit, "These things are difficulties which we do not attempt to explain."

But I suppose there is not a Bible school in the land where some explanation is not attempted; either by denying that any difficulties exist, or by giving some specious explanation. Those who pursue such methods do not reflect that such work, if attempted at all, must be thorough; that to assume positions that are not true, or that are but half true, is worse than useless; that it is better not to begin any investigations unless they are carried through in the spirit of scientific inquiry. On all subjects of research in other departments it is customary to give the latest and most trustworthy information. No one would respect a teacher in astronomy or chemistry who should retail exploded theories. Nor would his faith in these sciences be shaken, because some old hypotheses regarding them were proved to be wrong. It seems an injustice, then, that those who are called upon to be leaders in investigation regarding the Bible,—and who cannot escape this responsibility if they would,—should sometimes be regarded with suspicion, that their motives should be too often impugned and the results of their studies ridiculed, as if those who should know most about the subject they are called upon

to teach should be most ignorant of it, as if they were not solemnly summoned to search for the entire truth as far as they are able. They deserve in their efforts the sympathies and prayers of the church of Christ. While it may seem as if their work was that of tearing down, it is rather that of building up. It is to show that after criticism has done its utmost, both Lower and Higher,<sup>1</sup> we have the same gospel in all its essential elements.

I have chosen as the subject of my address, *The Book, the Land, the People*; or, *Divine Revelations through Ancient Israel*. I hope to be able to show that those things which are ordinarily regarded as difficulties disappear in a natural way if we consider the phenomena of the Bible, of its authorship and transmission as they really are. On the other hand, it seems to me that an examination of the natural characteristics of the Oriental peoples to whom and through whom the Bible was given, as disclosed by the Orientals of Syria and Palestine to-day, affords convincing proof that it was not of man in its original plan and purpose. When we consider the natural characteristics of Orientals we shall clearly see that no theory of evolution can account for the Bible as summed up and interpreted in the gospel.

I. We often speak of the Bible as one book by one di-

<sup>1</sup> Professor Green (*The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, New York, 1895, p. v) well remarks: "The Higher Criticism . . . has come to be considered one of the most dangerous forms of infidelity, and in its very nature hostile to revealed truth. . . . This is not the fault of the Higher Criticism in its genuine sense, but of its perversion. . . . It seeks to ascertain by all available means the authors by whom, the time at which, the circumstances under which, and the design with which they [the Scriptures] were produced. Such investigations, rightly conducted, must prove a most important aid to the understanding and just appreciation of the writings in question.

"The books of the Bible have nothing to fear from such investigations, however searching and thorough, and however fearlessly pursued. . . . The Bible stands upon a rock from which it can never be dislodged."

vine author. This is in a sense true, when we take into account the unity of purpose in the Scriptures as centering in the person and work of Jesus Christ. But when we look at the Scriptures, even in a superficial way, we find traces of many human hands, and perceive that God has not made one revelation of himself, but many, according to the needs of different ages. The Revised Version of Hebrews i. 1, 2 expresses this clearly: "God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son."

The attitude of Israel toward these manifestations of God has been variously described. At the same time we have in the Old Testament the record of many revelations. We might thus incline to think that the word *Biblia*, in its original signification, books, is more truly descriptive than our term *Bible* in its present meaning, book. At the first blush the term *Divine Library*, or *Bibliotheca Divina*, first used by Jerome,<sup>1</sup> does not seem to be far out of the way. But a more critical study of the composition of the Scriptures reveals the fact that such a designation is likely to be misleading. It may indeed be asked, whether, according to the enumeration in our English Bible of sixty-six books we have not sixty-six separate volumes in the *Divine Library*, some of which doubtless existed among the Jews as separate rolls, of which we find a frequent example among the Jews to-day in their rolls of Esther. But we discover when we examine the Pentateuch in a critical way—not to speak of other portions of the Old Testament—that it was made up of different elements. All modern critics, both at home and abroad, are essentially agreed as to the existence of these elements, as to their characteris-

<sup>1</sup> Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi, *Op. cit.*, Tom. ii. p. 901: "Pamphilus presbyter, Eusebii Cæsariensis Episcopi necessarius, tanto Bibliothecae divinae amore flagravit, ut maximam partem Origenis voluminum sua manu descripsit, quae usque hodie in Cæsariensi Bibliotheca habentur."

tics and the way in which they have been combined.<sup>1</sup> There is difference of opinion as to the age and succession of the documents which have been brought together in the first five books of the Bible, assigned by tradition to Moses. These documents have not been recast and fused together according to our Occidental methods, but pieced together as one might make a harmony of the New Testament from the Synoptics. Much sport has been made of this theory of the composite character of the Pentateuch by men of the traditional school, especially in uncritical attacks in some religious papers. It is not the way an Occidental would prepare a legal work; but it can be demonstrated that narratives in Kings and Chronicles have been prepared through the patchwork combination of earlier sources.<sup>2</sup> This method of composition is also favored by a characteristic of Orientals which I mention for convenience in this connection. Syrian Orientals have powerful memories, but are lacking both in analysis and synthesis. It is the testimony of one of the most eminent professors<sup>3</sup> in the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut, that this contrast between the Occidental and the Oriental came out in connection with his two sons who led their classes in the study of medicine. While their Oriental classmates could give the lectures they had heard word for word, the recitations of this surgeon's sons were their own mental product in this respect that they had digested what they had heard, and, when examined, gave it to their professors with the stamp of their own individuality. This peculiarity of the Oriental mind of being able to reproduce that which has been committed to it, but not to assimilate it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Briggs, *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch* (New York, 1893), pp. 143, 144.

<sup>2</sup> See *Style as an Element in determining the Authorship of Old Testament Documents*, in the *American Journal of Theology* (Chicago, 1897), Vol. i. pp. 318-325.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. George E. Post, M.D.

and cast it in a new form, is favorable to the modern critical theory of the Pentateuch of piecing together different documents. In the same breath that one laughs at this as absurd, he might laugh at the Oriental in his native costume or manner of speech. In scientific discussions, ridicule, the arts of the dialectician, should have no place.

To many it is a fatal objection to the modern critical theory, that the Pentateuch is referred to in the New Testament, and especially by Christ himself, as the work of Moses. Men in our age so anxiously claim their own mental progeny that we can scarcely conceive of an age and country where this was not the case. Modern criticism seems to have demonstrated that the legal code, known as Moses, both in its traditional and written form,—as the Psalms were known among the Jews as David,<sup>1</sup>—contains a combination of the legal enactments of Israel from their oldest code in the Book of the Covenant<sup>2</sup> down to the latest in the Priests' Code.<sup>3</sup> This code then was all known as Moses. In attributing all their legal traditions to him, the Jews had no thought that he himself was not the author of the unwritten legal system.

We have an apposite example in modern times and in a modern country. I refer to the last edition of Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar. Those familiar with the history of this work—not to speak of the Hebrew Lexicon—know that it has passed through at least twenty-six editions; of these at least thirteen have been since the death of the author in 1842. The editions have not been stereotyped, but each has been printed from type especially set up. This has been done that Gesenius, while living, and

<sup>1</sup> Heb. iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. xx. 22-xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York, 1897), p. 10. "This last designation is in strictness applicable only to the ceremonial sections in Ex-Num." The term, however, is extended so as to embrace all passages in Genesis and Joshua which betray the same age and style, and which are designated by P.

those who prepared each subsequent edition after his death, might have an opportunity to reconstruct the grammar with reference to the latest progress in connection with the Hebrew language. Here then is the strange fact of a grammar, of which Gesenius was the father, but so changed in the process of years that he would not recognize it as his own mental product if he were to come to life. In catalogues of books, in the work of the class-room, this grammar bears the name of Gesenius.<sup>1</sup> The modern art of printing enables us to follow the history of each edition back to the first; but we have not the same way of determining Israelitish law when Moses was its first promulgator and expounder, or of the successive digests of it. There is no dishonesty in giving the name of Gesenius to the different editions of the Hebrew Grammar, and no Jew could for a moment think of dishonesty in ascribing all the law to Moses, nor could he be conscious of the revisions through which it had passed during the centuries. It would be impossible, unless it were revealed to him, to know which laws were first announced through Moses and which came through a later legislation. Nor is this essential. We have, perhaps, a similar phenomenon in the titles given to the Davidic psalms relating the circumstances under which they were written by him. The tendency to increase the number may be seen in the LXX, which assigns an author to every one of the thirty-four psalms,<sup>2</sup> which in the Hebrew Bible have no sign of authorship, and in later Jewish tradition which, as I have remarked, finally ascribed all to David.

In the Prophecy of Isaiah we have, according to the modern critical theory, not only the prophet's own oracles, but also those of others. This appears from certain his-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the well-known history of Webster's Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Murray, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of the Psalms* (New York, 1880), p. 103.

torical allusions which seem to be clear and unmistakable. There are references in certain passages to a condition of things during the Babylonian exile.<sup>1</sup> These various oracles have been placed with those of Isaiah, and his name is prefixed to the entire collection in the editions which have been prepared by the Jews. Some of the oracles so placed, may have been by his pupils. Some of them definitely bear his name, others do not. They are all grouped with the Isaianic literature, and are anonymous. This, however, is not strange, when we consider that among the Hebrews the message was everything, the messenger was of less account. Of this, too, we have an illustration from modern times. There has never been a more distinct personality in American journalism than that of Horace Greeley. His name and that of the *New York Tribune* became synonymous, and yet there were contributions from other pens besides his own;<sup>2</sup> all appearing in the same paper, and not distinguished from his contributions except as his editorials bore certain earmarks; that is, Horace Greeley made the *New York Tribune*, was its animating spirit, but what he himself wrote could only be determined on internal evidence. This illustrates only the fact, that, in producing great reforms, the moving spirit may associate others with himself and may perpetuate his influence, without connecting his own productions with his own name. If the *New York Tribune* were now known as *Greeley's Tribune*, we should have in its issues from the time of Greeley an illustration, imperfect indeed, of the Prophecy of Isaiah, containing much from that peerless prophet, but also more from other writers who had been swayed by his personality, who wrote much as he would have written had he been living during the Babylonian exile. We might take another

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Driver, *Op. cit.*, pp. 211, 212, 216, 230.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Mr. H. Greeley was severely attacked for his views on the Sabbath question on account of an article prepared by Rev. W. W. Atterbury, which had been published as an editorial.

example from the *London Times*, or "Great Thunderer" as it is called, which represents principles rather than men. Hardly any prophecies could be more impersonal than those of Isaiah. With two or three exceptions they reveal scarcely anything of their author. Apart from the illustrations offered by Gesenius' Grammar and two great newspapers, such a combination of authorship in connection with a great name as is postulated under Moses and Isaiah seems quite incomprehensible to an Occidental mind. But, as we have seen, we have an illustration of the same thing in the Psalter, subsequently known as David, the authorship of which Jewish tradition attributed to him in connection with the ten elders,<sup>1</sup> Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, etc. Indeed, a large part of the Old Testament is anonymous. After all, the human authors are not our guarantee for the divine character of Scripture.

We are not, then, to put too much emphasis on the threefold arrangement of the Old Testament as Law, Prophets, and Writings, or their subdivision into twenty-two books. This is the work of the Jewish editors who have brought together the different books of the Old Testament, and has no special bearing on the authorship of each book, or the period when its constituent elements were given. The lawbook of Israel as found in the Pentateuch seems to be proved to be the product of centuries. This is also true of the Psalter, or ancient hymn-book of Israel, which must have run through a number of editions before it reached its present form. It is certain, too, that the oracles grouped under the name of Isaiah, including those which were uttered during the life of that great prophet, do not culminate until five or six generations after his death.

<sup>1</sup> Babylonian Talmud, *Baba bathra* (Amsterdam, 1645), folios 15, 16:  
 דוד כתב ספר תהלים על ידי עשרה זקנים על ידי אדם הראשון על ידי מלכיצדק  
 קעל ידי אברהם ועל ידי משה ועל ידי היסן ועל ידי ידותן ועל ידי אסף ועל ידי  
 ושלש בני קרח

We may advance a step further. The fact of revelations of divine truth is not conditioned by any theoretical forms of human authorship. It is as idle for us to specify in what style the Bible should be written, according to our Occidental ideas, as it is to determine what clothes the lawgivers, prophets, psalmists, and evangelists who received these revelations should wear. It might seem to some that a man clothed in camel's hair with a leathern girdle about his loins, with a bare breast and bare legs below the knees, would not be a fit representative of the King of kings. Doubtless our modern costumers would think a full-dress suit and patent-leather boots more becoming.

But the glory of each divine revelation is that it speaks the language of the people of each age to whom it is addressed; that it seeks to reach their hearts. Hence we are not to prescribe the forms of literature in which divine truth must have been expressed. We have no right to theorize as to the way in which God would speak to such a people in order to be worthy of him. Our study of the medium has simply to do with the message as it was given. We are not to think any mode of representation unworthy of God which divine wisdom might employ to reach the people. Hence we have no right to say that a revelation must be clothed in the form of history, but never in that of fiction; must be stated as actuality, but never in the forms of symbolism; might use poetry, but must shun all dramatic elements. It is true that the substance of each revelation cannot be divorced from the form; hence it is that the study of the form is of such interest and importance. But no evangelical student of the Bible should have any word of reproach for any man, who, while maintaining the fact of divine revelations, feels that, when necessary, he may freely discuss the manner of these revelations, and that the fact that these revelations have been made does not depend upon the way in which they have

been given; that is, the proof that God has made a series of revelations cannot be shaken by any assured results of criticism. There is only one *a priori* position that we have a right to postulate in the discussion of this question, and that is that God would use such a mode of representation in dealing with a given people as would reach them best.

The question, then, whether the Bible contains a series of revelations from God is of infinitely more importance than a consideration of the individuals by whom, and the times when, these revelations were spoken or written down. The divine author from whom the Scriptures emanated is everything: the human instrument through whom the messages came, while of interest, is of subsidiary importance. It is not a Moses, a David, or an Isaiah that is a guarantee of a divine revelation. If this were so, a large part of the Old Testament, as we have seen, would be without the seal of such great names for its authority, since it is anonymous. It is the people through whom the revelations came, rather than the individuals, who are to be the object of our study. These we must consider in their abode and in their special customs and characteristics, for these have infallibly determined the forms of the revelations that have been made. A study of the manners and customs of the people and of their mental characteristics, as I have observed, tends to remove some of the most serious difficulties from the Old Testament which have taxed the ingenuity of apologists for adequate explanation. On the other hand, a consideration of the teachings of Christ, especially in the Sermon on the Mount and as appearing in the Gospels, running counter to these manners, customs, and characteristics, furnishes a most powerful proof that the revelation made by the God-man in word and life is not an evolution from anything that preceded in Judaism, but is divine.

It is undoubtedly true that the Old Testament is too often judged with respect to that which is supposed to be its permanent and world-wide character. The temptation to put all parts of the Bible on the same basis, as authoritative for men of every age, has led to some strange uses of portions of the Old Testament which are clearly local and temporal in their character, which incorporate the views and practices of the times, and are thus indicated in the teaching of Jesus. It is well known that professed Christians during the centuries, both Catholics and Protestants, have found warrant for some of their most unchristian and cruel acts in the accounts of the dealing of the Israelites with their enemies. Imperfect ethics, shifty evasions of the truth, even cruel massacres, have found justification in the example of ancient Orientals, whose acts have not been read in the condemnation which falls upon them in the gospel. Add to this the fact already stated, which needs to be especially emphasized, that each portion of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, was originally given with reference to the history and needs of a particular people and a particular age. Neither legislator, prophet, nor psalmist was concerned with the wants of a people far away, but with those of a congregation then present. The power to touch other hearts, to be the medium of spiritual longings and aspirations through the centuries, came through those being the medium of such longings and aspirations who first gave them expression.

II. While this is so, much of the power of the Bible as a world-wide book is due to the country in which it was produced. Though so limited in extent, there is no land so small which furnishes such a microcosm, so that the mountaineer, the dweller on the plain, the sailor, the fisherman, the inhabitant of the temperate zone, or the one dwelling in torrid climes, may all find something in this book of wonderful variety.

To speak a little more in detail, the climate of Jerusalem is largely that of the temperate zone. In winter there is frost and snow. Even in summer the traveler may be surprised to find his thermometer in the evening and early morning falling below 60° Fahrenheit.<sup>1</sup> But he can easily pass in three hours of rapid driving—a journey which probably took the ancient Israelite twice as long—to the Jericho and the Ghor, or the deep valley of the Jordan. He can find indications of a tropical climate in the dry and thirsty soil and in the vegetation, but if he desires to discover a higher degree of heat and a vegetation that is even more tropical, let him go to Callirrohe, on the east side of the Dead Sea, where Herod the Great went shortly before his death, in the hope of betterment. There he will perceive the climate and vegetation of Nubia. It is one of the great surprises of the traveler in summer to find so many parts of the country where the nights are cool, while the days are hot. He can well understand the plaint of Jacob: "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night" (Gen. xxxi. 40).

Or if we turn to natural scenery, while Palestine and contiguous regions have not the grandeur of some countries, its inhabitants could easily contemplate a scenery which has stirred many an Old Testament writer.

None can visit Mount Sinai, or the Mount of God, can see it in its various aspects of majesty, without being impressed with the vividness of its portraiture by the ancient writer, and the reinforcement which the place gives to the Ten Commandments. Mountains like Hermon and Lebanon are far above the commonplace in scenery. They are fitted to inspire with the rarest emotions all who climb their summits. Even Jermak, Tabor, Carmel, and the Mount of Olives—not to mention others—must powerfully

<sup>1</sup>At 6.30 A.M., on June 20th of last year (1900), my thermometer registered at Hebron 55° Fahrenheit, and at Jerusalem, June 17th, at 7.45 A.M., 62°.

influence the imagination. It is no small thing that some of the Scripture writers have seen them, and felt something of their power.

If there is no inspiring river like our Hudson, or the Rhine, there are still features about the Jordan, so unique among rivers, as to give color to both the Old and the New Testament. Those who live by the sea, whether by fresh or salt water, have not been neglected in the allusions to the Sea of Galilee and to the Mediterranean, which are always so present in the Psalms and the Gospels that the sailor and the fisherman need not feel that the Bible is merely a landsman's book. Such natural features, in the allusions of Scripture, appeal to men in every age, and render the Bible universally adapted to be understood and appreciated in its references to the climate and physical characteristics of the country. Hence, while it was written for the people of a particular country, through the physical peculiarities of that country it is wonderfully adapted to the people of every clime.

There is another factor in the land where the Bible was produced, which, in a providential way, has contributed powerfully to its world-wide mission; and in this respect we have a marked contrast between the Old and the New Testament. The Old Testament in its present form, aside from one<sup>1</sup> of the documents used in the Hexateuch and the Prophecy of Hosea, is the work of Judæans; the New Testament has received its characteristic features from Galileans, or those who were free from the narrowness of Judæa. In the first place, then, we have the natural separateness of the southern kingdom, where the religion of Israel before the captivity received its most special development. Afar from the great world-empires of Egypt and

<sup>1</sup>The so-called Elohist document; cf. Addis, *The Documents of the Hexateuch*, p. lv: "Hence, though there is much dispute about the place in which the Jahvist wrote, there is a general consensus of the critics that the Elohist belonged to the Northern Kingdom."

Assyria, until Judah became a vassal state, and even afterwards, the religion of Israel was less in danger of being overwhelmed by foreign influences. But when Judaism became only self-seeking and fanatical, as in the time of Christ; when Christianity was to become a world-wide religion, and the Bible a world-wide book through the addition of the New Testament,—it is from Galilee that our Lord and his disciples came, where they might catch something of the universal spirit of Roman civilization, by their close proximity to one of the great arteries of Roman travel. The apostle Paul too, notwithstanding the pharisaic narrowness of his education, is better fitted to become an apostle of the Gentiles through the liberalizing influence of Roman citizenship.

III. I pass now to consider the people to whom and through whom the divine revelations that we have in the Scriptures were made. As Hebrews they are recognized as Semites, all of whom had a kindred speech.<sup>1</sup> The term is a loose one; that of Orientals or people of the East is still looser, unless we limit its application.

We have the great advantage, not only of being able to study the land in which Israel lived, but also the people. By these I do not refer to the Jews, who, while retaining their racial peculiarities, have been so powerfully molded by the different nations in which they have found a home, so that there is a great difference between a Polish, a Spanish, and a Chinese Jew. The best type of ancient Israel in characteristics, in manners and customs, and at some later periods of their history, especially among the peasant class, is confessedly among the Arabs and fellahin of Syria and Palestine. There are certain portions of the country where you might see Abraham, as if he had risen again, or meet Rebecca or Rachel at the well, or see David with his flock, or Elijah in his hairy mantle. You may be reasonably

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar* (Boston, 1893), pp. 1-8.

sure that you have the same dress, the same usages, the same modes of speech. The study of the modern Arab and fellahin, then, is an important help in understanding some of the peculiarities of the Old Testament which seem strange to the Occidental mind. We shall find that the same institutions and the same characteristics exist to-day in Syria and Palestine as we find in the Old Testament.

In our study of the Old Testament we must recognize the existence of the institutions of ancient life which have left their impress upon the legislation and history of the Old Testament. Our Lord himself has indicated the temporary character of such institutions, though sanctioned by the great name of Moses (Matt. xix. 8). These institutions which no Christian would feel for one moment called upon to defend, or should consider it necessary to explain away, are blood revenge, slavery, polygamy, easy divorce, and, on occasion, the massacre of peoples of a different faith.

It is surprising to the modern traveler in the East, who looks at modern life more narrowly than the modern tourist, to find that blood revenge is still practiced, that the institution constitutes a most serious peril to any one in Syria or Palestine who may slay another in self-defense. The institution of cities of refuge among the Israelites was necessary because of this custom. But blood revenge is simply a manifestation of the spirit of revenge which finds expression in a few of the psalms usually called imprecatory.<sup>1</sup> I know it is argued by eminent authorities that times come when such psalms are justified;<sup>2</sup> but we may

<sup>1</sup> These have been well classified by Albert Barnes in his *Notes, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical on the Book of Psalms* (New York, 1869), Vol. i. pp. xxiv-xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> B. B. Edwards, D.D., *Imprecations in the Scriptures*, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. i. pp. 79-110; J. J. Owen, D.D., *The Imprecatory Psalms*, *Ibid.*, Vol. xiii. pp. 551-563; Edwards A. Park, *The Imprecatory Psalms, Viewed in the Light of the Southern Rebellion*, *Ibid.*, Vol. xix. pp. 165-210.

be sure we have an echo of the Oriental heart,<sup>1</sup> and not of the spirit of the gospel, when we read:—

“ O daughter of Babylon that art to be destroyed ;  
Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee  
As thou hast served us.  
Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones  
Against the rock ”—(Ps. cxxxvii. 8, 9).

Christ has by implication clearly condemned all such utterances which have been allowed to stand in the Old Testament. All those institutions of the Old Testament which are so often criticised—as polygamy, divorce, and slavery—find abundant illustration among Syrian Orientals to-day. In some respects their practice is far inferior to that of the Old Testament. But it is the same people regarding woman as a possession obtained by purchase, or capture. It is true that the provisions for slaves in the Old Testament are exceedingly humane, seemingly the best that could be devised in that condition of society.

The wholesale massacres ordered in the Old Testament are akin to Oriental ideas of the treatment of those who are not co-religionists under certain circumstances. In the Pentateuch we have an enumeration of peoples whom the land was ready to spue out, because of their corruption. Such travelers as Doughty in his “Arabia Deserta,”<sup>2</sup> and antiquarians like Macalister of the Palestine Exploration Fund, have found in their researches and excavations

<sup>1</sup> This is essentially the position of Albert Barnes, who says, *Op. cit.*, pp. xxix, xxxvii: “ There is nothing to prevent our regarding this as a statement of the actual feelings—the pleasure—the satisfaction which they would actually *feel* who should wreak vengeance on Babylon. . . According to this view, the expressions which are used in this record are not presented for our imitation. The mere fact that they are recorded as having occurred in the lives of good men is no evidence that they are right, or are to be followed by us.”

<sup>2</sup> *Arabia Deserta* (Cambridge, 1888), Vol. i. pp. 265, 266: “ The herdsmen’s grossness is never out of the Semitic nature . . . Little Joseph is a talebearer to their father of his brethren’s lewd conversation in the field. Such are always the Semitic nomads. Palestine, the countries

indications, as they have thought, of the truth of this characterization of the Old Testament writers. Some of the vices of these peoples were abominable and unmentionable.<sup>1</sup> The divine command as to their extermination may be likened to a surgery, necessary for the preservation of a people with such a high mission as Israel, yet it is massacre, so well understood by the Oriental, of which we have examples under the Turkish government in its dealings with the Armenians,<sup>2</sup> but relieved by statute of its most revolting features in the kindest treatment of female captives which that age knew.<sup>3</sup> We may say, then, that the divine revelations which were made to Israel under the Old Covenant did not set aside any of the great institutions of Oriental life, though seeking to regulate them and to remove their most objectionable features.

beyond Jordan and Eden, given to the children and nephews of Abraham, spued out the nations which dwelled before in them, and had defiled the land: the Beny Israel are admonished, lest the soil cast out them also. In Moses is remembered the nomad offense of lying with cattle [this is said to be openly practiced by donkey boys in Egypt, as was reported to me by a tourist; besides I was solicited to be present at such an exhibition]; the people are commanded to put away guiltiness from the land by stoning them: in Arabia that is but a villainous mock, and which the elder sort acknowledge with groans and cursing. The pastoral race being such, Israel must naturally slide back from Moses' religion to the easy and carnal idolatry of the old Canaanites." Cf. Zwemer, *Arabia: The Cradle of Islam* (New York, 1900), p. 41 and note.

<sup>1</sup> The evidences of unthinkable vices of the ancient Canaanites, discovered by Mr. Macalister, were exhibited to me by Dr. Wheeler of Jerusalem, who saw in them abundant justification for the annihilation of these peoples.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Fowle, of Cæsarea, Turkey, is authority for the statement, that the revolutionary society among the Armenians deliberately sought to bring on a massacre so that the Christian powers might intervene. They rightly reckoned that, according to the Oriental principle of solidarity (cf. Josh. vii.), the whole Armenian people would be held responsible for the acts of the revolutionists. The Turks began the massacre, because the Armenians, through these revolutionists, had lifted up their hands against the Sultan (cf. 1 Sam. xxvi. 11).

<sup>3</sup> Deut. xxi. 11-14.

Let us now pass to a consideration of some Oriental characteristics as they have affected the form of the revelations. It was of course possible for the Divine Spirit to eliminate these, but a revelation which should cut itself loose from the forms of speech and expression of a given people would be of but little, if of any, use to that people.

The thinking of the Syrian Oriental and his mode of expression tends to hyperbole. Otherwise he feels that he is making no impression. From childhood, accustomed to such forms of speech, he gets much the same idea from such language as his Occidental brother would from a precise and prosaic account. He describes a little trickling stream as a copious fountain;<sup>1</sup> he speaks of the presence of some people in a village as that of all the inhabitants. In a moment of excitement, he may address two persons, in a courtyard, a woman and a boy, as O world!<sup>2</sup> In his desire to secure the services of a physician for an ailing lad he may say, that he is the only son of his mother, when she has two other boys.<sup>2</sup> He may break forth in an eloquent poetical description of the renown and riches of a bridegroom and may describe the splendor of his mansion, when the subject of this laudation has done no great deeds and is a poor man living in a hovel.<sup>3</sup> Such are the people who were made the instruments of divine revelations. When we compare the Old Testament with other Oriental books, we see evidences of restraint, that Oriental imagination and

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Theophilus Waldmeier of Asfûrijeh, near Beirut, who was in Abyssinia ten years and who has been in Syria thirty years, says: "If a native found a little water, he would say he had found a fountain. You must always understand that the Oriental uses the language of exaggeration. It may come from this that Orientals would not credit his statements unless he used strong language. He does not mean to tell a lie, but he wishes to make an impression."

<sup>2</sup> Examples furnished by Dr. George E. Post, professor in the Medical Department of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut.

<sup>3</sup> From an interview with Rev. John Zeller of Jerusalem, who has been a missionary in Syria about fifty years.

Oriental speech have not had a free hand, that they have been preserved from all fantastic extravagances.<sup>1</sup> At the same time there are many clear traces of Orientalisms both in the Old and New Testaments. If we understand the language from our Occidental point of view, we shall be misled, both in certain descriptions and in the use of some passages in the Old Testament to which we are inclined to ascribe literal dogmatic value. It is certain that the Old Testament historian who is describing the magnificence of Solomon is writing like an Oriental (1 Kings iv. 20; x. 27). The same is true of the author of John's Gospel, when he says: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself would not contain the books that should be written" (John xxi. 25).

The Oriental is least of all a scientific historian. He is the prince of story-tellers. Narratives, real and imaginary, spring from his lips which are the truest portraiture of composite rather than individual Oriental life, though narrated under the form of individual experience. He knows nothing of the labor and accuracy indicated in the prologue of the Gospel according to Luke: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed" (Luke i. 1-4).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the Story of Joseph in Genesis, with the Tale of the Two Brothers, Records of the Past, Vol. ii. pp. 137-152, and the twelfth Sura of the Koran respecting Joseph. Conspicuous examples of Oriental fancy run wild may be found in Hershon, Genesis with a Talmudical Commentary (London, 1883), p. 63. "Rab Jehudah said in the name of Rab: 'Adam's stature reached from one end of the world to another,' as it is said (Deut. iv. 32), That God created man [Adam] upon the earth, and from one side of the heaven to the other." Sanhedrin 38b.

The investigations of the untrained Oriental are practically worthless.<sup>1</sup> Of philosophy he has none. But he is peculiarly sensitive to impressions. He is under the spell of authority, whether right or wrong. From his point of view, might makes right. If God has spoken, his decree must be right, because God has uttered it.<sup>2</sup> By his very limitations he faithfully reproduces that which has been given him, sentence for sentence, and perhaps word for word.

He is not a mathematician. He is inclined to deal in round numbers like ten, forty, a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand.<sup>3</sup> The large numbers he reports are likely to be ten times those of actuality.<sup>4</sup> One is reminded of this inability to report numbers in the account of the forty thousand stalls for Solomon's horses, of which we read in 1 Kings iv. 26, which is reduced to four thousand in 2 Chron. ix. 25. In this connection I well remember the remark of a devout New England deacon,<sup>5</sup> who was a diligent and reverent student of the Bible years ago, that he thought there must be some mistake about some of the numbers in the Old Testament. It is true that in copying documents errors would be more likely to be found in numbers than elsewhere, but it is not unlikely that some of the very large numbers in the Old Testament cannot be taken literally in their original form.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Post stated that in the preparation of his work on the "Flora of Syria, Palestine, and Sinai" he had paid considerable sums to Orientals for botanical collections, but had found them practically worthless.

<sup>2</sup>The same eminent authority says: "They think God makes right and wrong by edict."

<sup>3</sup>So Dr. Post, and Miss Jessie Taylor of the Moslem School for Girls, who has been in Beirut since 1865, and others.

<sup>4</sup>Doughty (*Op. cit.*, Vol. i. p. 130) says of the Arabs: "Their minds have little apprehension of the higher numbers. I have commonly found their thousands to signify hundreds, so that the tenth of their tale very nearly agreed with my own reckoning." Cf. Palmer, *The Desert of the Exodus* (New York, 1872), p. 72.

<sup>5</sup>Deacon A. W. Porter of Monson, Mass., a staunch supporter of Mary Lyon, and treasurer of Mount Holyoke Female Seminary for many years.]

An Occidental may feel that the admission of these orientalisms in the Old Testament tends to weaken its authority. But we must remember that its revelations and teachings were designed for an Oriental people, and in adaptation to their language, customs, and modes of thought were admirably fitted to meet their needs. Most of the Old Testament was spoken before it was written. Its earliest narratives passed from mouth to mouth, oral law preceded written law, oral prophecy, with inconsiderable exceptions, preceded written prophecy, oral songs and proverbs preceded written. We may see how Hebrew parallelism was a powerful aid to the memory, and was a natural device for this purpose. An oral gospel preceded a written gospel, and Paul sent his letters to definite churches and individuals. We should expect, therefore, to find special adaptations to particular people, and in the Old Testament to an Oriental people. The establishment of this principle may serve to explain the presence of certain things in the Old Testament which cannot be reasonably accounted for in any other way.

We turn now to consider the evidence which we have in the human authorship of Scripture of its divine origin and authority showing that it cannot be accounted for by any naturalistic theory of development. This is true of many features in the Old Testament and is far more true of the entire spirit and teaching of the New. We can say in the most positive way that the Bible, as summed up in the gospel, and as judged by its effects, cannot be accounted for as a merely human book. As we have always lived under a Christian civilization it may be difficult for us to appreciate the truth of this proposition, which must seem evident to every mind which has come under the power of the truth, or which is capable of exercising sound judgment. The ideals and demands set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, as well as in other parts of the gospel, are

entirely contrary to human nature, and are utterly foreign to the ideas and conceptions of Orientals. There is time to give only a few examples:—

1. In the attitude towards woman. The Oriental regards woman as an inferior being. Of this persuasion there are many examples. The orthodox modern Jew daily thanks God that he is not a woman.<sup>1</sup> Even in the Old Testament she is reckoned inferior to man. The legal estimation of a female child is considered half that of a male (*Lev. xxvii. 1-8*), while the mother remains in her uncleanness twice as long for a female birth as for a male. It was just as proud a boast in the time of the patriarchs that a woman had borne her husband sons as it is among the Orientals to-day (*Gen. xxix. 34*). Even Paul's judgment of her, though far in advance of his time, seems to have been affected by his Jewish training (*1 Tim. ii. 11-15*).

In Islam this unfavorable judgment of woman is even more conspicuous, and is "one of the greatest blots" upon it.<sup>2</sup> She is not considered as being without a soul, as is oftentimes reported, as in Karl May's "Am Jenseits";<sup>3</sup> but

<sup>1</sup> In the Prayers of Israel (*כוס ישועות*) (Prag, 1864), in the order for morning prayer the Jew is directed to thank God (1) that he is not a heathen, (2) that he is not a slave, and then (3) that he is not a woman:—

ברוך אתה יהוה אלהינו מלך העולם שלא עשני אשה

<sup>2</sup> Palmer, *The Qur'ân* (Oxford, 1880), Part I. p. lxxv, writes: "One of the greatest blots on El Islam is that it keeps the women in a state of degradation, and therefore effectually prevents the progress of any race professing the religion."

<sup>3</sup> "And Islam teaches that woman possesses no soul, and therefore cannot participate in the everlasting joys of Paradise" (p. 85). Where does Islam teach this? The Koran says expressly (*Sura xliiii. 70*): "Enter ye into Paradise, ye and your wives happy."—Trans. Palmer; cf. *xliii. 23; xl. 8*. But Burckhardt, *Travels in Arabia* (London, 1829), p. 348, is authority for the following statement which partially supports May's assertion: "Women being considered in the East as inferior creatures, to whom some learned commentators on the Koran deny even entrance into Paradise, their husbands care little about their strict observance of religious rites, and many of them dislike it, because it raises them to a nearer level with themselves."

there is occasion for this report in the treatment that she receives at the hands of Moslems. Religious acts on her part are looked on with disfavor. The joys of Paradise are not denied her, but she exists in this world simply to minister to the faithful.<sup>1</sup> Marriage is only for the sake of children. Woman has no companionship with the man who has bought her by the payment of dowry, and who holds her as his thrall.<sup>2</sup> At any time, and for any cause, he may dismiss her simply by saying, "You are divorced."<sup>3</sup> He may bring from one to three other wives into the same tent, or apartment, if he desires and has the means. He may marry the next day after her death, if he chooses, without losing social standing.<sup>4</sup> She may have borne him sons; if she ceases to please him—and women fade early in the East—he can send her away. She cannot permanently retain any of her children. She may marry again, but it must be with a loss of prestige. The changes in her matrimonial life may come so often that she may sink

<sup>1</sup>"Islam says that woman is only created for the purpose of being a servant of man with her body."—Karl May. The picture of sensual delights in the Koran, the discussion of women in other books, and the attitude of the Moslem world towards her, confirm this statement. (Cf. Sura lxvi. 10-40; lv. 50-78; and Book xiii. On Marriage, in *Mishcat-ul-Massabih*, or A Collection of the Most Authentic Traditions regarding the Actions and Sayings of Mohammed, Calcutta, 1810, Vol. ii. pp. 76-155.) Islam's conception of the function of woman is utterly debasing, and not for a moment to be compared to the noble purpose assigned her in the account of creation as the helpmeet for man (Gen. ii. 18).

<sup>2</sup> According to the Koran (Sura iv. 38), the husband may beat his wife, and this is a common practice. Cf. Jessup, *The Women of the Arabs* (London, 1874), pp. 7-19; and Doughty, *Op. cit.*, Vol. i. p. 236.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Hedaya, or Guide; A Commentary on the Mussulman Laws* (London, MDCCXCI), Vol. i. p. 213.

<sup>4</sup> This according to the testimony of Moslems. Mr. Fowle relates a shocking instance of a Christian who, on the death of his wife, persuaded her sister to marry him, and, in order to save expense, combined the invitation to the marriage with the announcement of the funeral. The man even had a photograph taken of the deceased in her coffin, of his children, of himself, and of the bride!

as low in thought and character as the poor Occidental prostitute.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever examples there may be of marriages of affection among Moslems, the historical Christian churches, or among the Druses—the latter may freely divorce their wives, though they may not have more than one wife at a time<sup>2</sup>—the Oriental type of woman still remains. Whether among the Bedawin of the desert or the Syrians of the town, woman unaffected by Christ's teaching is low down in the social scale, far less loved than the Arab's sons; far less valued than a beautiful mare. There is bitter disappointment and sorrow in an Arab or Syrian household when a daughter is born; there is joy when the mare casts a filly.

Closely connected with this cheap rating of the sex is the prevalent impurity of speech among the men and women of the East. This grossness appertains to the Arab of the desert<sup>3</sup> and to the man of the town. It is characteristic of the fairest inmate of the harem<sup>4</sup> as of her less favored sister of the rural district. Little children speak freely of things that should be remote from the knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Doughty, *Op. cit.*, Vol. i. p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> Jessup, *Op. cit.*, pp. 27-29. A prominent Druse from a town near Salchad told me that most Druses had to experiment several times before getting a wife that was satisfactory. He was living with a second wife.

<sup>3</sup> Doughty, *Op. cit.*, Vol. i. pp. 265, 266.

<sup>4</sup> Testimony of a woman who loves Moslem women and has mingled with them many years, and who has trained Moslem girls to be pure of speech. She said: "The conversation of women is abominably filthy. . . . Druses and Moslems are alike in this." This obscenity follows naturally enough from the view mentioned by Doughty, *Op. cit.*, that the Oriental thinks such talk permissible, "since it is God that has thus founded our nature." It seems evident that in the modern Oriental world the same freedom exists which is assigned by tradition to Mohammed. Cf. Leyde, *The Asian Mystery*, p. 226. There are many other references to standard works that might be cited, abundantly confirming the above statement.

of childhood.<sup>1</sup> But how can it be otherwise, when we consider the relations of the sexes? and the fact that when a Moslem must allude to his wife or harem he uses the masculine gender, or apologizes for mentioning such an unclean thing?<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible, on any theory of evolution, to account for Christ's estimate of woman. His treatment of her was at once respectful, delicate, and brotherly. On their human side he seemed to regard women as equals,—not as inferiors. It would be instructive to recall the recorded instances in which he spoke to women and they ministered to him, his lingering at the well to help the Samaritan woman (John iv. 7-29), his treatment of the one who had so sorely sinned, who anointed his feet (Luke vii. 37-50), and in the disputed passage (John viii. 1-11), is infinitely above the ideals and conceptions of Orientals, uninfluenced by his teachings in any age.

But even more remarkable than this is his conception of marriage, of one man for one woman, until death do them part (Matt. xix. 3-9), thus doing away with polygamy and easy divorce, the great foes of woman's dignity and prosperity,—all this so contrary to Oriental ideas to-day.

The highest demand, however, of all is purity of thought and speech, which are at the foundation of purity of life. The wanton look—which is only warded off by that livery of disgrace, the Oriental veil—is forever forbidden under breach of the seventh commandment (Matt. v. 28). A rigor of which the Oriental world never dreamed, and which is contrary to human nature in every age and clime, is demanded. Well may woman who owes such a debt to her Saviour be foremost in the church and in every good work.

2. Another example of an ideal promulgated by our

<sup>1</sup> Testimony of Dr. Frank I. Mackinnon of Damascus.

<sup>2</sup> Jessup, *Op. cit.*, p. 12: " 'May God elevate you' above the contamination of this subject." Women are considered unclean from the age of puberty until they can no longer bear children.

Saviour which is utterly contrary to Oriental practice through the millenniums is in the abrogation of blood revenge. This, as we have seen, is one of the most pitiless institutions of the East. It has not had its origin because Orientals are more cruel in their vengeance than other ancient peoples. We read of it in the account of Cain, who, as Abel's murderer, must fear the avenger of blood. It is recognized in the account of the covenant made with Noah: "And surely your blood, the blood of your lives, will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it: and at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. ix. 5, 6). This is not merely a demand for capital punishment, but for the death of the murderer by the nearest of kin. Like polygamy, which is traced back to Lamech (Gen. iv. 19), it is one of the most ancient institutions of the East; hence most difficult to eradicate. The law of vengeance makes no distinction between the murderer and the manslayer, each is equally in danger of the avenger of blood.<sup>1</sup> The most sacred duty of the nearest relative, as unaffected by European or Turkish law, is to seek the death of the murderer or manslayer, or of some one else who belongs to his tribe or sect. This law was so thoroughly ingrained in Oriental life, in Old Testament times, that there was no attempt to remove it, but, as in the case of other Oriental institutions, simply to regulate it (Num. xxxv. 12; Deut. xix. 6, 12; Job xx. 3, 5, 9).

But the principles inculcated by our Lord leave no room for blood revenge or personal vengeance. His dying prayer on the cross for his murderers is an example of this, "Father, forgive them." His charge to love one's enemies (Matt. v. 44), indeed the whole spirit of the gospel, while

<sup>1</sup> "No distinction is made between murder and accidental homicide."

—Rev. A. Forder, for more than five years missionary at Kerak.

it does not do away with the punishment of the murderer, does away with the avenging of blood. It cannot exist under civilization that is truly Christian.

3. The death of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world (John i. 29; Gal. i. 4; Rev. i. 5; cf. Matt. xxvi. 13; John iii. 16, 17; 1 John ii. 2) is a representation entirely alien to the ideas of the Oriental world. One might die for his own tribe or clan, but to die for enemies (Rom. v. 6-10), for men of other tribes, for every tribe under heaven, is not the conception of an Oriental. It is true that in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah we have the preparation for this idea; but there, in the mind of the writer, it seems to be limited to Israel, for it is Israel that lament their blindness as to the true character of the Servant,<sup>1</sup> and who recognize the vicarious character of his sufferings in their behalf.<sup>2</sup>

4. The crown of the Bible, the essence of the gospel, is in God's love message to the world (John iii. 16) and in Christ's commission to his disciples just before his ascension: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19). We find such conceptions even in the Old Testament when we read in Isa. xix. 24, 25: "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that the Lord of hosts hath blessed them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." Such words as these bear the stamp of their divine origin, for they are contrary to all Oriental ideas and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah* (New York, 1884), Vol. ii. p. 42: "He [the prophet] takes his stand among the Israelites of a later age . . . and hears their penitent musings on the natural rejection of the prophecies respecting the Servant, all of which were in the course of coming true."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Comment on verse 4. "This is the first of twelve distinct assertions in this one chapter of the vicarious character of the sufferings of the servant."

standards. The spirit of the Oriental, unaffected by Christianity, is well expressed in a petition quoted by Leyde, in his "Asian Mystery," from a manuscript of the Nusairiyeh, "that God may take out of their hearts what little light of knowledge and certainty they may possess."<sup>1</sup> It is a fact, attested by missionaries of longest experience and residence in Syria, that even Protestant Christians, bound as they are by clannish prejudices, have hardly the conception or the desire for the conversion of Moslems and Druses. Naturally they do not consider it possible. This is not merely because of the mortal danger to which a Moslem is exposed when he becomes a Christian, but because it is so difficult to break down the wall of Oriental particularism, which keeps out all the world except some favored sect.

Mohammedanism is sometimes spoken of as one of the three great missionary religions and as making many converts, but they are not converts to the great Lover of the world.<sup>2</sup> They are rather those who become vassals of a party. A confession with the lips is sufficient. The man who has been all his life a Christian and who is a native preacher has a musket leveled at his breast, and is told to confess Islam or die. He refuses, and in an instant a bullet pierces his heart. The Oriental unmastered by Christ has no conception of a gospel for all mankind.<sup>3</sup>

Think then of the Scriptures, which grew up through more than a millennium, with divine messages originally

<sup>1</sup> P. 163.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Tiele, *Outlines of the History of Religion* (London, 1884), p. 98: "The God of Mohammed stands no higher than the common Semitic ideal of morality. He is an arbitrary, vengeful, bloodthirsty tyrant."

<sup>3</sup> It is true that Mohammedanism is a universal religion, but it has no gospel. Cf. Tiele. *Op. cit.*, p. 103. "Its triumph in Arabia was due to political considerations, and to the absence of anything better to occupy the field. The way for its diffusion was paved by arms, and the pecuniary and civil privileges conferred on believers among vanquished peoples secured for it a multitude of adherents. . . Founded among a people which developed late, it is the youngest and also the newest, of the universal religions."

addressed to a particular people of the East, in different ages and under different conditions in the Old Testament preparing the way for the coming of the Great Deliverer, and in the New testifying of his words and acts. Conceive of law, psalmody, prophecy, and history bearing clearly the impress of the race and times that produced them, and yet in their demands, doctrines, and ideals infinitely above the conceptions of Orientals in every age, setting forth in some of the prophets, contrary to Oriental particularism, a salvation which takes in all the world. Conceive of one born of the Oriental peasant class, casting aside all Oriental prejudice and narrowness, and presenting ideals of personal character, social standards, and relations to the world, whose realization has been the despair of the choicest spirits in every age; one at the best so limited in his earthly surroundings and experiences and yet so world-wide in his sympathies and sufferings. No Oriental peasant, no sage that the Oriental world has produced, no mere man, could by any possibility have climbed such heights. He is divine, and his gospel is divine, and the Old Testament that prepared the way for him is divine. The fact of divine revelations to man culminating in the greatest revelation through Jesus Christ stands unassailable. The power of the Scriptures and of Christ is not in what they say of themselves, but in the appeals which they make to the heart and conscience. Before them the sinner stands convicted and condemned, without assurance of salvation except as they reveal it. In them is the only adequate hope and consolation which human hearts can find. In Christ alone, as revealed in the New Testament, is the salvation which the world needs. Love begets love. The love of God as revealed through Christ breaks down all barriers in every age, and opens the entire world.

The manner in which God has communicated his will to man, first through the mouths of his chosen servants, and

then through the record of their teachings, is of small account before the great verities of our Christian faith. The difficulties disclosed by a critical study of the Scriptures can in no way affect the divine origin of the revelations made by God to his ancient people, except as men magnify them so that they lose their power to see the divine character of the Bible as a whole. The unlettered Christian, or the modern critic may each so rest in the power of the gospel as not for one moment to be disturbed by the human elements and marks of imperfection that we find in the Scriptures. They are but the fond language of the great Father addressed to the child ear and the child heart of his people through the remote ages of the past. They cannot affect the reality of the divine revelation made through Jesus Christ.

Of the fact of such a revelation we must all be persuaded. The gospel of Jesus Christ in all its richness and power must be the aim of all our study. A persuasion that it, and it alone, is the power of God unto salvation must be the overmastering conviction of our lives if we are to become such ministers as our age needs.