

ability to read the sacred writings well. It is well known that it was a great treat to hear the late Henry Ward Beecher read a psalm. His fine musical voice, over which he had such mastery, could imitate the roll of the thunder or the low wail of an infant, and his intense earnestness enabled him to bring out the varied thought and feeling of these matchless productions of the Hebrew Psalmists, rendering his reading as power-

ful as his preaching. I know a minister in one of our large cities who has little gift for preaching; but there are two things he can do: he can pray and read the Scriptures. I heard him once read the story of the man who was blind from birth, and this he did most interestingly. With true dramatic instinct the characters of the various interlocutors were finely brought out, making his reading instructive to a degree.

The Masai and Their Primitive Traditions.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. GEORGE G. CAMERON, D.D., ABERDEEN.

VI. MOSES.

Events similar to those reported in the O.T. in connexion with Moses are associated in Masai tradition with more than one person—particularly with Marumi and Musana. The name of Marumi's father was Geraine, but he bore the surname of Eramram, *i.e.* the stutterer—stuttering being a hereditary characteristic of the family (cf. 'Austrian Lip'). For the name Eramram, cf. Ex 6²⁰ (Amram, the father of Moses). Marumi inherited the family peculiarity (cf. Ex 4¹⁰; and the Mohammedan tradition regarding Moses' impediment in speech, Sale's *Koran*, chap. xx. p. 257, n.). Marumi had a brother Labot, and a sister Meria—neither of whom stuttered (cf. Ex 4¹⁴). Meria (Miriam) died young, of some sort of rupture. Marumi and Labot both married.

Marumi was a pious man, who enjoyed the favour of God, and was employed to make known to the Masai the will of God. He was also an astronomer, and from the position of the stars was able to announce the coming of storms. One day he was summoned to the Mount of God. The Divine Being made known His presence in a thick cloud. Marumi prostrated himself before God. And God spake to him, and said, 'From this time the Masai must circumcise their children.' And he gave to Moses the instruments to be used in performing the rite. In the O.T. circumcision is reported as having been instituted in connexion with the covenant made with Abraham. With regard to the difference of time thus raised, it may be noted that in Captain Merker's volume no

chronological data are given. The usual note is 'about this time,' or some such phrase. This is all that can be expected. There is no reason to believe that exact chronological data were available for the author. From the appearance of Naraba, when we touch on what may be regarded as O.T. history, occurrences are reported without regard to strict chronological sequence. But with reference to circumcision, the author properly directs attention to what is reported in Ex 4, which points to a renewal of circumcision, after a period of neglect, in the family of Moses. And if other occurrences in the life of Marumi are to be connected with the O.T. record of Moses' life, the Masai tradition regarding the origin of circumcision may contain an obscure reference to the incident reported in Ex 4. On another occasion, Marumi was called up to the sacred Mount, and God spake thus to him: 'The unbelievers are so wicked that they deserve no more forbearance. Let the Masai proceed against them with arms, and overthrow them all.' Previous to this two old men had been summoned to the Divine presence on the Mount, and informed that the unbelievers were becoming so wicked that God would no longer afford them protection; and the Masai were ordered, through these two favoured individuals, to proceed against the unbelievers, but only with sticks; no life was to be taken, no blood was to be shed. With reference to these different degrees of punishment, Captain Merker suggests that a parallel may be found in the history of Moses—in Ex 3⁸, where the land only is to be taken from the Canaanites, and other tribes; and in Nu 25¹⁷, where the Midianites are ordered to be slain; and Dt 3^{2, 3};

where the same punishment is ordered in the case of Og, king of Bashan.¹

Kimare was another excellent man—highly favoured by God. He was very small in stature, hence his surname, Musana (Moses?), which signifies dwarf. He exercised large influence over the people, and was instrumental in fixing the week of seven days. The seventh day was set apart for special services of religion. On the sixth day the people assembled and partook of a common meal, for which nine oxen were killed. After this meal they returned to their kraals. Next day they assembled for instruction in religious and moral truth. And the influence of Musana was such that the seventh day received the name of the *lucky day*. The arrangements for the seventh day correspond largely with services associated with the name of Moses in the O.T. (cf. Ex 16^{25, 26}, and Dt 5¹²⁻¹⁴).

VII. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

The Masai have their Decalogue, which agrees largely with that of the O.T. The first commandment proclaims the absolute unity of God, and forbids the making of any image of the Divine Being (cf. Ex 20^{3, 4}). The second forbids murder (*ib.* v. 13). The third forbids covetousness (*ib.* v. 17). The fourth forbids quarrelling, and the drinking of honey-beer by the young, as this often led the young to quarrel and fight. (In regard to the second part of this commandment, the author refers to the case of the stubborn and rebellious son—a glutton and a drunkard—who was to be stoned, Dt 21¹⁸⁻²¹.) The fifth forbids adultery (Ex 20¹⁴). The sixth enjoins the liberal support of the poor (cf. Dt 15⁷⁻¹¹). The seventh enjoins a monarchy (cf. Dt 17¹⁶). The eighth enjoins monogamy. Only in the case of the death or dismissal of one wife may a man marry another. This commandment is not found in the Mosaic legislation. But this is not surprising. Among the Masai it was short-lived, and it was repealed before the days of Marumi (cf. the reference to Naraba above). [It is interesting to compare the offering of a ram as a thank-offering in connexion with the birth of a child, among the Masai, with the ritual prescribed in the same connexion, in Lv 12.] The ninth forbids

¹ It may be worth noting here that the Masai regard all non-Masai as El-Meg, *i.e.* unbelievers. Cf. the similar view among Mohammedans, and the treatment of unbelievers prescribed in the Koran.

the killing for food of any animals used for breeding purposes. (Here, again, it is not surprising that such a law is not found in the Mosaic legislation. Israel were a settled agricultural people in Palestine. The Masai were a nomadic, pastoral people, dependent on their flocks; and such a law was of the greatest importance to them.) The tenth prescribes special services of religion on the seventh day of the seventh month, and the eighth day of the ninth month. The services in the seventh month may be compared with the ritual of the day of atonement in the O.T., which also fell in the seventh month (Lv 16). Only two days in the year of withdrawal from the ordinary pursuits of life, as compared with the large number of such days in the Mosaic legislation, may appear to indicate a relatively low state of religious sentiment and conviction. But the difference between a nomadic and a settled people should not be overlooked. Among the former the demands of the flock are various and obligatory. The neglect of these, for days on end, would involve disaster.

Such is the Decalogue of the Masai. Several of the commandments are identical with those on the same subject in the O.T. Others have a distinct place in the Mosaic legislation, although they are not found in the Decalogue of Ex 20. A few are due to the requirements of a nomadic people, and could not suitably find a place in the code of a settled agricultural community.

The occasion of the promulgation of the Masai Decalogue may be mentioned. A fiery serpent appeared among the Masai and endeavoured to draw them away from God by giving out that he also was God, and was more powerful than the God worshipped by the Masai. Thereupon, God sent the angel Ol Dirima, who, from the Mount of God, proclaimed the ten commandments. In this connexion the supreme importance of the first commandment is obvious. The fiery serpent suggests the narrative in Nu 21. Both among the Masai and the Israelites the tradition regarding this serpent belongs to the *law-giving* period. In the Masai tradition the action of the serpent suggests the tempting serpent in Paradise, rather than the serpent of Numbers, which was used for the curing of a fatal malady. But, according to the O.T. record, the fiery serpent of Moses became an idol, and appears to have filled the place of an idol till the days of Hezekiah. That reforming king,

in the effort to free his people from the seductions and consequences of idolatry, broke it in pieces. If a connexion is allowed between Masai tradition and the narratives of the O.T., it is possible that in this case also, as in other cases, traditions referring to different occurrences have, in the course of time, been mixed up.

Other matters are mentioned by Captain Merker which suggest a connexion with occurrences reported in the O.T. Those referred to are the most striking, and are sufficient for the purpose in hand. It should be noted that the traditions as given by the German officer and savant do not come farther down than the legislative period of the Exodus, of which the record is given in the Pentateuch.

What is to be made of these traditions? In the first place, the question already raised may be repeated: Have we any assurance that the traditions reported by Captain Merker are the primitive traditions of the Masai—transmitted from father to son for six thousand years or more? Those who have lived for years among tribes like the Masai in South Africa emphasize the difficulty of extracting from the natives information which they are unwilling to impart. In these circumstances a certain measure of reserve is reasonable until important statements made by these natives are otherwise corroborated or supported.

It has already been noted that this German officer, knowing that the matter he was investigating was a delicate one, waited patiently for years, acted so as to disarm suspicion, and believed that, having gained the confidence of the proper parties, he received a trustworthy account of the traditions. But the trustworthiness of the communication must depend on the secret intention of those who made it. Even a German critic cannot read the heart of a living Masai. If those entrusted with the keeping of the Masai traditions were disposed to deceive the German official (a foreigner, who, according to a recent report in the newspapers, inflicted on them a defeat in the field), it was easy to do it. He was at their mercy in this matter, as they were at his mercy when he overcame them in battle. Every credit must be given to Captain Merker's belief that he has reported the genuine primitive traditions of the Masai. But, in view of the remarkable character of those traditions, further investigation must be made before the con-

clusions set forth in this volume can be accepted with any measure of confidence.

Another question should also receive attention: Are these Masai really Semites from Arabia? Have they no other connexion with the Hamites spread over so large a part of North Africa than such as may have arisen to victorious invaders of the country through the intercourse of many centuries? Captain Merker is of opinion that the Masai exhibit the physical characteristics of the genuine Semite. But do they not show negroid characteristics? And if so, are these to be explained simply through a lengthened intercourse with neighbouring negro tribes?

But to pass from this and to return to the traditions themselves,—if these are not genuine Masai traditions, what are they? Whence and how did the Masai receive the knowledge of them? That is the important question, and it merges in the question which has to be answered on the assumption that Captain Merker's conclusions are well founded. In both cases, the question is: 'How are the traditions to be accounted for?' Our author faces this question, and holds that four answers—but no more—are possible. (1) The traditions may have been received from Babylon. (It is scarcely necessary to say that, in regard to the early narratives of the O.T., this is a popular opinion at present.) (2) They may have been taught to the Masai by Jewish, Christian, or Mohammedan missionaries. (3) The traditions of the Masai, the Jews, and the Babylonians may have had a common source. (4) The real source of the traditions is to be found in the Masai themselves.

The first answer is excluded, if the date assigned by our author to the settlement of the Masai in Equatorial East Africa is accepted. 4000 B.C. precedes by at least a millennium and a half the time when, according to present opinion, the Babylonian influence, to which the O.T. narratives are supposed to owe their origin, began to be operative. For the earliest traditions, that must be admitted. Besides, the *form* of the traditions should be considered. The monotheism of the Masai differs emphatically from the polytheism which appears in the Babylonian traditions. Further, the Masai traditions appear in a form suitable to simple, pastoral tribes, and, as such, could scarcely have been derived from a settled, cultured people, like the Babylonians. This may

be admitted for the earliest traditions. But, as has been noted, there are Masai traditions which appear to refer to the O.T. narratives regarding the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—and also Moses. Now, with the earliest of these patriarchs we reach, practically, historical times, when the Babylonian influence was unquestionably at work. Did the Masai receive their traditions regarding Naraba (Abraham) and the other patriarchs from Babylon? According to Captain Merker, the answer to that question must be a distinct negative. This will appear by and by.

The second answer deals with a matter which scarcely receives justice at the hands of Captain Merker. It is quite true that he advances arguments of some force, and presses them in strong language against the explanation of these traditions through missionary influence. One of these arguments may be referred to. It has already been noted that the traditions reported in this volume cease with the legislative period of the Exodus (unless there be an obscure reference to Hezekiah in connexion with the fiery serpent, which is not probable). Now if Jewish missionaries sought to make converts among the Masai, it is quite improbable that they made no reference to the wonders wrought by Jehovah in behalf of Israel at the time of the settlement in Canaan, and subsequently. So it is inconceivable that Christian missionaries would stop short at Sinai and make no reference to Jesus Christ. The same remark applies to Mohammedan missionaries and the great prophet whose name they bear. This argument is an important one, and must be fairly met. But it is no use to attempt to deal with it till the traditions are proved to be trustworthy, and assurance is given that there are no more to follow.

The author holds that neither Mohammedans, Jews, nor Christians have ever exercised any influence of a religious kind on the Masai,—in their restless movements across the steppes in Equatorial East Africa. His authorities, he tells us, were men of fifty years of age and upwards. These men, in his judgment,—a judgment founded on careful investigation,—could not have been influenced in their statements by the teaching of any missionaries. Their testimony was that they had received from their fathers the information they had communicated,—and that their fathers received it from *their* fathers; and so on for

countless generations. The question is: 'Who is to vouch for this?'

It may be said that, even if these traditions are of foreign origin, missionaries from other peoples are not needed in order to account for the knowledge of them by the Masai. Some of the Masai may have been in the countries where these traditions had their home—carried there, it may be, as captives taken in war. These—or some of them—may have escaped, or been permitted to return to their native country. If so, they would relate to their countrymen the strange things they had learned in their exile. The form of the traditions is opposed to this explanation. The Masai, according to Captain Merker, could not have transformed, say, the early narratives of Genesis into the traditions communicated to him. The same difficulty, of course, arises if the narratives in Genesis are derived from the Masai traditions. We shall see immediately how our author deals with it.

It is quite possible that the author is correct in his exclusion of missionary influence. But the subject is too important to be so summarily disposed of as it is in this volume. Did the monks of Nubia send none of their number as far south as the Equator? Abyssinia received Christianity in the fourth century. The ruling class in Abyssinia was probably drawn from Semite immigrants from South Arabia, who asserted themselves against the original Hamite inhabitants. Abyssinia is not very far from the home of the Masai—as distances go in Africa. Through Portugal the Roman Catholic Church—the Jesuits—for many years exercised very considerable influence along the east coast of Africa, in the neighbourhood of the Masai. It may be assumed that these zealous missionaries of the Church of Rome did not neglect their opportunities. Further, Mohammedans pushed their way into Africa, and established a slave-trade which proved the greatest curse to Africa within our knowledge, and which, only in these days, is being with difficulty suppressed. It is noteworthy that some of these Masai traditions closely correspond to the teaching of the Koran and the practice of Mohammedans.¹

¹ Cf. the order to beat women already referred to, with *Koran*, chap. iv. pp. 64, 65, ed. *ut sup.* Cf. also the absolute obligation to obey Allah whatever the character of the command may be, with the Masai conception that 'all law is merely the will of God,—that right is simply what He

Before a conclusion is arrived at regarding the critical and religious value of this book, it is eminently desirable that fresh attention should be directed to the history of Christian missions beyond the bounds of Abyssinia, and to the operations of the Arabs in East and Central Africa during the last thousand years. The difficulty arising from the non-mention of Jesus Christ and Mohammed will not be overlooked. But it is possible that, if the traditions in this volume are genuine, others may, by and by, be discovered.

It is not necessary to go into any detail regarding the third and fourth answers,—viz. (3) the traditions of the Masai, the Jews, and the Babylonians may have had a common origin; (4) the traditions originated with the Masai. A brief summary is all that is necessary to show the author's conclusion. The Amai, as has already been stated, are the primitive people from whom have sprung the Masai, the Hebrews, and the Amorites. And the Amai are the most remote source, at present available, of the traditions reported in this volume. The Masai, the direct descendants of the Amai, received the traditions

commands, and wrong, what He forbids. So, it may be said, it is with Jews and Christians. Yes; but would it be so if their God commanded woman to be beaten whenever she did not obey man; or if in a fit of temper he ordered a house to be burned within which was a mother with her sick child; or if he allowed his prophet—his special representative among Mohammedans, as Christ is among Christians—unlimited license with women, and severely restricted others? Cf. *Koran*, chaps. iv., xxxiii., lxvi., etc.

from them. The tribe El Eberet, part of the Masai, shared the traditions. But the El Eberet were the direct ancestors of the Hebrews, and these in turn received from their fathers the sacred traditions of the race. The Amorites (also, as noted above, a portion of the Masai, and therefore familiar with these traditions) settled in Palestine. After a time, as the world opened to commercial enterprise, these Amorites entered into relations with Babylon, visited that country, and communicated their religious traditions to the inhabitants. It appears from the Masai tradition that, when the Decalogue was given, the name of God was changed from E' majan, or E' magelani to 'Ng ai (cf. the change from יהוה אל שרִי, Ex 6³). In Babylon, while the external form of the Masai tradition, communicated through the Amorites, was accepted, the spirit of the state religion was too strong for the Masai monotheistic worship of 'Ng ai. Hence the form of the Babylonian traditions, to which so large an influence is being assigned in present discussions on the O.T. The original traditions are not Babylonian. They have come from the Masai.

It is obvious that, if Captain Merker has given us the real beliefs of the Masai, an interesting and important question has been raised for Biblical students. It would be unreasonable to throw the Captain's conclusions aside, as of no value; it would be foolish to accept them as beyond dispute. What is wanted is further investigation, and it is sincerely to be hoped that this may be undertaken without loss of time.

At the Literary Table.

THE EYE FOR SPIRITUAL THINGS.

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