

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

## The Hebrew Legend of Civilisation in the Light of Recent Discovery.

BY W. ST. CHAD BOSCAWEN, F.R.H.S., LONDON.

ALL nations of antiquity have some legend, however crude, of the beginnings of civilisation—traditions of the gods or heroes who were the inventors of the arts and sciences. The Phœnicians, the Hebrews, and the primitive Chaldeans all alike agree in placing the dawn of civilisation in that semi-mythic age intervening between the creation of the world and the great cataclysm of the Deluge. It was the period of the heroes or mythic semi-divine rulers like the Shesu-Heru, or "followers of Horus," the ten antediluvian kings of Berossos, or the ten patriarchs of the Hebrew records. In this age each caste of the primitive society sought to place its founder. These legends of civilisation are often crude and difficult of analysis, but nevertheless they are of the greatest value in studying the early history of a people, and it is extremely important that the Hebrew legend has been preserved to us in so complete a form as we find it in the fourth chapter of Genesis. This remarkable chapter has been well called the Hebrew Legend of Civilisation, in that here we find recorded the first independent steps of man upon the path of civilisation.

This chapter, it must be noticed at the outset, is a very remarkable one, as it stands to a certain extent by itself, being less connected with the general narrative than others, and it is also, with the exception of the last two verses, entirely the work of the Yahvistic writer. Its contents are quite in harmony with the general scheme of this author's work, which regards any independent action of man on his own part, as a self-exaltation, and a revolt against his Divine Maker. The Yahvist alone records the Fall, the Fratricide, and the primitive attempts of man to improve his condition upon earth after his expulsion from Paradise. Thus we see that here the beginnings of civilisation are assigned to the time of Cain, the murderer—branded and cursed by God, a wanderer and barbarian. It is admitted, as it were, that it is a necessary result of man's nature that he will rise from barbarism to a higher stage, but to his progress he accords no divine sanction. How

curiously this is shown in the narrative of the Fall—the forbidden fruit having been eaten, the eyes of the pair are opened, and they are conscious of their nakedness. To hide the shame, girdles or loin-cloths of the fig are made (Gen. iii. 7), and then after the curse "coats of skins" (Gen. iii. 21), which at once places enmity between man and the brute creation. In the fourth chapter we have a remarkable synopsis of the dawn of civilisation, which seems to me to merit a much more attentive study in the light of monumental evidence than it has hitherto received. I propose, therefore, in this paper to examine its contents in the light of recent discoveries, especially those made during the last few years in Chaldea, which, until other evidence is forthcoming, must be regarded as the cradle of the human race, according to biblical and Chaldean traditions.

There is a method and arrangement in the various incidents in the chapter, which indicates a study and knowledge of the laws of racial and social development not usually found in these primitive traditions. The first pair banished from Paradise have two sons, Cain and Abel. At once we have the heads of the two earliest subdivisions of the human race. Cain "the tiller of the soil," the agriculturalist; and Abel the keeper of sheep, the nomad, "the shepherd." Between these two in all ancient civilisations there has always been an unceasing rivalry. It is this struggle between the nomad and the agriculturalist for the favour of the God of the land which we see here described in the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, and in the death of Abel the final triumph of the agriculturalist over the shepherd. We have a further trace of this same rivalry in the Hebrew twins, Esau and Jacob. Esau the wandering hunter would starve were it not for the mess of lentils grown by Jacob, and for this, his heritage—the birthright of Divine promise—passes to his brother. (Gen. xxv. 29, 34.) In Arab literature, and indeed in Arab life until the present day, this rivalry is frequently met with in the everlasting feud between the Bedaween and the Fellaheen. How emphatically this is the case will

be seen from some of the traditional sayings of the prophet of Islam, who says "the Divine glory (*al Shakinat*) is with the shepherds, vanity and impudence amongst the agriculturalists." Another traditional saying of the prophet is very bitter. Once on seeing a ploughshare and another agricultural implement in a house, he said: "These implements do not enter into the house of a nation unless impudence enters in there at the same time." So also the Khalif Omar in his testament says: "Protect the Bedawi, for they are the root of the Arabs and the germ of Islam." Indeed this love and preference for the nomad life over settled and city life remained long a powerful factor in Israel. We see it in the rebuke of Nathan to David, who would build the temple: "Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle" (2 Sam. vii. 6, 7); and even more strongly we see this nomad germ of the religion of Israel clearly indicated in the great "prophet of the desert," Elijah. The whole mission of Elijah is a gigantic protest against civilisation and luxury, as represented by the Hebro-Phœnician court of Ahab and Jezebel. He comes as it were with his camel's-hair robe, with the scent of the desert in his hair and his beard, to protest against the dyed garments, the paints and unguents of this evil house of Ahab. Thus we see how important the nomad element is as a factor in the social as well as the religious development of Israel.

It is plain that under the Hebrew dispensation it was the life of the shepherd which pleased the God of the land. Gardening had been the task of Adam, "to till and dress the garden" (Gen. ii. 8), but even this work is rendered a toil and a burden to man by the curse which is put upon the ground (Gen. iii. 17, 18). Here we have a marked contrast to the teaching of Chaldea. As became a race of agriculturalists, such as the old Akkadian population of Chaldea, the tilling of the soil was a work pleasing to the gods. Sargon I. of Akkad, the hero-king of the Semites, was a gardener, and the "goddess Istar prospered him in his gardening, so that he became ruler over the black-heads (Akkadians)." From his day the name of "gardener" (*ingar*) became an honoured title assumed by the kings of Babylon, and by the

"great Nebuchadnezzar," who calls himself "gardener of Babylon" (*ingar Babilî*).

Cain the tiller of the soil kills his brother; so in the gradual development of a community the nomad and herdsman succumbs to the settler and agriculturalist. By this fratricide he brings upon him the curse of Yahveh.

The incident here is very important, and derives much light, I think, from monumental sources. The question of Yahveh, "Where is Abel thy brother?" and the answer, "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" seem to form a curious play upon the word *brother*. The Assyrian *akhu*, brother, the Hebrew *akh*, is cognate with *akhu*, "side," the "one who stands be-side another"; it is also equivalent with *natsaru* (נצר), "to protect, to keep," and this is a synonym of *samaru* "to surround, protect," cognate with the word used here, נצר "keeper."

Cain now banished from the face of Yahveh, becomes "a fugitive and a vagabond." And Cain went out from the presence of Yahveh, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the East of Eden (Gen. iv. 16). This expression נוד וְנֹד is remarkable as it contains the same root as נוד, Nod, the land in which the first murderer took refuge. Hitherto there has been no ground on which to base an explanation of this important name, but one is now afforded us by the inscriptions. The root *nadu*, "to wander," is one of frequent occurrence in the texts. From this root we get the participial noun *manda*, "wanderers," and the ethnic title, *tsab manda*, "host of wanderers," the equivalent of *barbaroi*, and of *Guti*, the Hebrew *gotim*. This name is found as early as the eighth century applied to the wild hordes who dwelt in the mountains to the east of the Tigris. By the Elamites, later Persians, Medes, and in one of the inscriptions of Nabonidus it was applied to the Scythians, who had destroyed the temple of the Moon-God in Kharran. It applied generally to the mountain regions to the east and north-east of Chaldea, the ranges of Kurdistan and Luristan, with Mount Rowandiz as a centre. This region from the earliest times had been the home of mixed races, who from time to time had swept down upon the fertile plains of the Tigo-Euphrates valley. Here was situated the Akkadian Olympus, "the Mountain of the East." Kharsag-Kurra, where the gods held court; here also was the holy mountain of Nizir, on which the ark rested. Still more important, here was the

original home of the Akkadai or Mountaineers, the Turanian population of Chaldea, the first city builders, and inventors of the arts and sciences.

The everlasting feud between the inhabitants of Chaldea and Elam, which extended from the days of Sargon I., B.C. 3800, until the fall of the Empire in B.C. 538, at the hands of Cyrus, the Elamo-Persian, might well represent the "blood feud" between Cain and Abel's descendants.

The statements in Gen. iv. 17 would seem to imply that the beginnings of civilisation were in this land of Nod or Elam, a statement amply borne out by the evidence of the monuments. The inscriptions discovered by the American expedition fully bear this out, that the Elamite civilisation was as old, and in all probability older, than that of Chaldea. Sargon I., B.C. 3800, and his son Naram-Sin, both claim the conquest of Elam, and among the inscriptions of this dynasty are those of Urmush, or Alu-usarsid, who dedicates the spoil of Elam to Mulil, the god of Nipur, "To Mulil Urmūsh (Alu-usarsid), king of Kis, when Elam and Barase he had captured, the spoil of Elam he gave." The only war of Gudea, B.C. 2800, is that against Anzan or Southern Elam, and the inscriptions and sculptures of Anubanini, king of the Lububini, and another king whose name is lost, found by M. de Morgan at Sirpul and Zohab, are certainly of great antiquity, if not as old as the time of Sargon I. We see, therefore, that there is ample indication that a considerable degree of civilisation was developed in the mountain region to the north-east of Chaldea, "the land of the wanderers," at a very early period, and which, according to Akkadian traditions, was eventually transplanted to Southern Chaldea. To Cain is assigned the building of the first city: "And he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch" (iv. 17). The name Enoch, or rather Khanoch, חֲנוֹךְ, is one which Hebrew etymology does not admit of, and indeed we have in the Hebrew primitive traditions a curious confusion between the Enoch of this chapter and the Enoch of the time of Seth (v. 17); a confusion which appears also in the Arabic legends of Edris, and in the Chaldean legends of Nisuthrus, or Shamas-Napisti, the hero of the Deluge. It is not so much with this confusion, with which I hope to deal at some future time, as with the name of the first city, with which we are concerned in this article.

The name of the ancient capital of Chaldea, which forms the centre of the Epic of the Nation, the "Story of Gilgames," or Gizdhubar, is *Uruki*, the Erech אֶרֶךְ of Gen. x. 10. The word is, however, but a Semiticised form of the older Akkadian, name, *Unu-ki*, *Unug*, "the city of the land," i.e. *metropolis*, which, allowing for the guttural pronunciation of the first sign representative of both ע and ח, is an exact equivalent of the Hebrew חֲנוֹךְ. Here, then, the *first* city of Cain is evidently identical with the first capital of Chaldea, Unuk, or Erech.

The next step is the birth of Irad, עִירָד, the son of Enoch, which event is curiously reversed in the Elohist genealogy in chapter v., where Enoch is the son of Jared, יָרֵד. Here we have again, I should suggest, geographical rather than personal names. The name Irad is an exact transcription of the old Semitic Babylonian name, Eridu, the southern sacred city of Chaldea, called by the Akkadians, *Eri-dugga*, "the Holy City." If the two names Irad and Jared are both varied transcriptions of these names, we have a curious fact revealed. In the first case, the civil capital, Unuk, or Erech, is the father of the *religious* capital; in the second the relationship is reversed. This is to be explained by the Elohist following a Semitic rather than an Akkadian order in his genealogy, and the Semitic, especially Arabian, element, was much more strong in Eridu than in Erech, as shown by the pure, almost monotheistic, character of its creed. The next pair of names in both genealogies present some difficulty, indeed the monuments do not seem to me to afford any explanation: Mehujael—Methusael, and Mahalaleel and Methusaelakh. Professor Sayce's suggestion that Methusaelakh is a form of the Babylonian *Mutu-ša-ilali*, "Husband of the Goddess," and therefore a form of Tammuz (*Hibbert Lecture*, p. 185), seems to me too bold.

I now pass to Lamech, לֶמֶךְ, and here we are once more on solid ground of comparison. Lamech is evidently the dialectic Hebrew form of the Akkadian Lamga, a name of the Moon-God (*W.A.I.* ii. 47-66). Now one of the most common titles of the moon in this character was that of *nagar*, the workman or artificer, also the title of *niri nagar*, "chief workman," a very suitable title for the man whose descendants were the founders of trades. The names of the two wives of Lamech are such as we

should expect to be those of a lunar divinity—Adah, the Assyrian *edhute*, “darkness,” and Zillah, the Assyrian *tsillu*, “shade.”

The great and indeed the only centre of moon-worship in Chaldea was the city of Ur, and I think that there is no objection to our connecting Lamech and his posterity with this city. If so, we get a very valuable explanation of the next step in the development of civilisation. According to our Authorised Version, “And Adah bare Jubal, he was the father of all such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle” (iv. 20). This reading seems to me to imply a certain retrograde step after the clear development of city building we have seen. The word for tent here is the well-known Hebrew word *ohel*, “ohel.” Now *ohel* is cognate with the Assyrian and Babylonian *alu*, “city,” while even in Hebrew it has some variant uses. Compare its manifest use for “house” in Isa. xvi. 5, “the house of David” (A.V. tabernacle) and in Ps. cxxxii. 3, “I will not enter into the dwelling (*בְּאוֹהֶל*) of my house.” I should, therefore, be inclined here to adopt the reading, “All such as dwell in the city and have cattle,” which exactly describes the life of the population of Ur, Erech, Sippara, and other cities—who dwelt in the towns and had large quantities of cattle feeding in the open country. We have there no divergence from the strict order of national development. This is exactly confirmed by the seventh Creation tablet, where we have a clear distinction made between the *bulu tseri*, “cattle of the desert plain,” and the *bulu ali*, or “cattle of the city.”

It is important to notice the words which are now used to represent the various fathers of inventions, Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal, all derivations from the same root, *בָּרַ* the Babylonian *abalu*, “to bring, to flow, to produce.” And to these names, at least to the first two, we may assign the rendering of “producer,” “inventor.” With regard to the derivation of Tubal, I shall deal with it shortly.

The next step brings us to the invention of the arts—first, those of pleasure: “And his brother’s name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and pipe” (A.V. organ) (iv. 21).

The position of music here is a very interesting one, as it tends very much to indicate the accurate character of the Hebrew Legend of Civilisation, in its conforming to social development. Here we find the arts of pleasure preceding the arts of utility, an order very general among primitive

people. Many African tribes, as well as Polynesian islanders, who have no knowledge of working the metals, have invented some primitive form of musical instruments. The earliest monuments of the oldest civilisations all reveal a knowledge and invention of musical instruments. In Egypt we have the harp, pipe, and cymbals. In the primitive sculptures of pre-Hellenic Asia Minor, at Elyuk, and in Mexico and Central America, we find the inhabitants had invented musical instruments. In early Chaldea we have monumental evidence of their use at a very early date. The sculpture of which we give a drawing here belongs to the primi-



tive age of Chaldea, certainly prior to B.C. 3000. It is of great value to us in the study of this remarkable chapter, for it shows us representations of exactly the instruments attributed to Jubal; the harp being represented in the lower tier, and the pipe and cymbals in the upper.

In the sculpture, the harp is of very rude make, but must still be beyond dispute, and can be identified with the Hebrew *kinnor*, *כִּנּוֹר*, a word for which no better etymology can be suggested by Gesenius than *כָּנַר* “to vibrate.” The name however seems to me to be rather of foreign origin. In the inscriptions of the age of Gudea, from the ancient city of Tel-Lo or Sipurra, from which this sculpture comes, there is a remarkable inscription, in which many of the gods of the ancient city are

enumerated. Among others we find the god *Duziabsu nin kinunir ki*, "Duzu of the deep, the lord of Kinunir." This is another form of Duzu, or Dumzi, the Akkadian youthful Tammuz Adonis, whose worship was current throughout the East. Now, throughout the East, the worship of Tammuz was especially associated with music, particularly that of the harp or cither (*kinnor*), and the flute (*ugab*), in the myths of Asia Minor and Greece, which are derived from the Syrian, Phœnician, and Babylonian myths of Tammuz. Thus, as Professor Sayce says (*Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 235-55), "Greek mythology knew the name of Tammuz as well as that of Adonis. Theias, or Thoas, was not only the Lemnian husband of Myrina and king of the Tauric Khersonese, who immolated strangers on the altars of Artemis, he was also king of Assyria and father of Adonis and his sister Myrrha or Smyrna. In the Cypriote myth the name of Theias is transformed into Kinyras. In the Cypriote Kinyras, who takes the place of Theias, we have a play upon the Phœnician *kinnor*, or *cither*." Professor Sayce then says: "Its real origin is to be indicated by the name *Gingras*, which Adonis himself bore. Here it is difficult not to recognise the old Akkadian equivalent of Istar, *Gingira*, or *Gingiri*, 'the Creatress.'" With this explanation I cannot agree. I think we should have seen the origin of the name of Kinyras and of the *kinnor* or harp, in the city of *Kinunir*, which was the sacred city of Duzi. This name of *Kinnir* became at a later period one of the names of the city of Borsippa, and from thence may have spread to Cyprus; and there is nothing unusual in the name of a musical instrument being derived from a city.

The second instrument invented by Jubal was the pipe or organ (*ugab*). This word I should also assign to a foreign origin. In Akkadian inscriptions the flute or pipe used by the *galli*, or eunuch priests, in the religious services, was called *gi-bu*, "the long reed," and as an object made from plants would have the determination of that class before it the name would be written *u-gi-bu*, which gives us a very near equivalent to the Hebrew *ugab*. Thus it seems to me that we have not unlikely, in these first musical instruments, records of the dawn of civilisation in Babylonia; at least the names seem to be capable of reasonable explanation by the Babylonian etymologies, which they are not by Hebrew.

The last step in the progress of civilisation here recorded is that of the arts of utility, as represented by the working of the metals of copper and iron: "And Zillah, she bare also Tubal-cain, the forger of every cutting instrument of brass and iron" (Gen. iv. 22, R.V.). Here we have a clear statement as to the first metal worker. The name is a remarkable one, Tubal-cain, and has exercised the minds of many commentators. Tubal, as I have already said, may be classed with Jabal and Jubal, and mean the producer, while the second element affords some difficulty—Cain, or rather Kani, קני, distinct from Cain of the early part of the chapter. It may mean "a smith," from the root קנ, "to beat," whence the name of the Kennites, a tribe of "smiths"; and indeed this seems borne out by the other words, "to hammer," "to sharpen," used in the sentence. Still there are many points of resemblance between the old Akkadian fire-gods, Gibil and Ningirsu, which makes me not disinclined to think that we have here a form of the primitive Hebrew fire-god or fire-hero. The following passage from a hymn to the fire-god may bear this out: "Of copper and tin thou art the mingler, of gold and silver thou art the purifier." The selection of the metals here is very remarkable—"copper" (*nakhas*) and iron (*barzel*), marking as it were the limits of the metallic ages of the human race; there being both in Chaldea and in Egypt a copper age, preceding the making of bronze (Petrie *Kahun*, p. 20). Many suggestions have been made with regard to the Hebrew *nakhas*, "copper," a word not found in the other Semitic languages. I cannot help thinking that the word has some connexion with the name *Nukhasse*, the region of the Orontes valley, which, along with Alasiva, as we know from the Tel-el-Amarnah tablets, was one of the principal sources of copper supply to Egypt. The letter of the king of Alashiza, in the British Museum, evidently indicates that he was in the habit of sending a regular supply of copper each year. Thus he says: "Now to thee 500 measures" of bronze I am sending thee for a peace-offering—my brother, in that the bronze is small quantity, take it not heart for in my land the hand of the pestilence god was abroad, all the men of my land slew, and the making of bronze there was not." The land of Nukhasse was in the immediate neighbourhood of Alasya, although its situation is not exactly known. In the Chaldean inscriptions we get much information regarding the early working

of the metals. In the statues of Gudea, about B.C. 2800, we have a very valuable list of metals known to the Chaldeans at that age. "This statue, not of silver, or of alabaster, or of copper, (*ud-kabar*) or of tin, or of bronze (*urud*), let no one make." Here we see both bronze and copper mentioned as well as tin (*anna*), but no mention of iron. Of the working of copper we know at this period, for among the objects found at Tel-Lo, the ancient Sippura, the capital of Gudea, and dedicated to the fire-god Ningirsa, are some bronze or rather nearly pure copper figures which are cast. The names given and associated with copper are very interesting, as revealing its great utility in those primitive ages. It was used for weapons, plates, and *sabbu*, or "rings," which were probably a species of primitive currency.



Copper occurs in the earliest hymns, so that its working certainly was associated with primitive times. In Chaldea as in Egypt the working of iron is of late discovery. We find no trace of it in the early hymns, and in the inscriptions of the Middle Assyrian Empire, in the ninth century

before our era, we find "bronze axes" especially mentioned as being used to cut paths through the mountains. In Palestine iron was possibly worked before the extensive use of it, except as an imported product, in Chaldea; and that iron-smelting was understood in pre-Israelite times seems to be shown by the discoveries of Mr. Bliss at Tel Hesi or Lachish. The mention here of iron seems to indicate, as Professor Sayce would say, a derivation from Palestinian sources, as the general tenor of the chapter is otherwise Babylonian. We have now reached the conclusion of the examination of this remarkable chapter, and by the aid of the monuments, I hope, have been able to explain and elucidate its rich contents. The general sequence of events seems to me most accurate and regular.

*Analysis.*

Primitive age, iii.

Nomad pastoral life. Abel, v. 3.

Agriculture begun by Cain, v. 3.

Nomad replaced by agriculturalist, v. 8.

Khanoch or Unuk, Erech. *Civil capital.*

Irak, Eridu.

*Religious capital.*

Agriculturalist becomes city builder; of the blessing to the Barbarian (*nadu*), v. 17.

Jubal, invention of arts of pleasure, v. 28.

Tubal-cain, inventor of metal working.

(1) Copper age (Chaldea).

(2) Iron age (Palestine), v. 23.

Thus we see how in its main features this Hebrew Legend of Civilisation in its framework affords no contradiction to the progress of social development as illustrated by the Chaldean civilisation, and even in detail does not present any marked divergence—thus indicating a careful study of the subject on the part of the writer.

## Professor William Robertson Smith.

BY PROFESSOR S. D. F. SALMOND, D.D., ABERDEEN.

THE lamented death of Professor William Robertson Smith in the ripe strength of his remarkable powers, has added another to the many heavy losses which have fallen in rapid succession on the small band of Arabic scholars in England. Students of the Old Testament have at the same time been bereaved of an acknowledged leader, and Scotland of one of her most talented sons.

The event had been painfully anticipated for some time. It was known that the distinguished scholar had been fighting for his life for years. The presence of an insidious disease had been detected in his system. He had taken the discovery with calmness, and gone on the way of toil and study with a brave and trustful heart. The care of friends and the skill of the surgeon had kept the

trouble at bay for a space, but the last two or three years had been years of weariness and pain. During that period the present writer had repeated opportunities of seeing him in Cambridge, and of marveling at the indomitable spirit with which he held to his cherished work, and continued to teach when prostrate. But the weakened frame wore gradually down. The promise of a rally which seemed to rise a few weeks ago faded away, and on the morning of Saturday the 24th March, tidings came from Cambridge to prepare his relatives in Aberdeen for the worst. He lingered on for some days, for the most part in unconsciousness, but waking up at times into the brief recognition of some friend by his bedside. In the early morning of the 31st of March, as the fresh light of a bright spring day began to flood the courts and gardens of Christ's College which had become so dear to him, he passed gently into the land in which all shall know even as also they are known.

The report of his decease was received not only with the general regret which is naturally felt when a man of gifts is lost to letters and learning, but with the sorrow which is known within a narrower circle when a leal and honoured friend is taken away. For he had the gift of attaching men closely, even fondly, to him, and he was never without associates, some of them younger than himself, not a few of them much older, men of ways of life, too, and professional avocations very different from his own, who clung to him not only because they honoured him for his great and varied abilities or sympathised with him in the causes which he championed, but because they valued him for his personal worth, his kindness, generosity, and loyalty. Formidable as he was in his antagonisms, unsparing in his exposures of the weaknesses of an adversary, and impatient of all unreality and pretentiousness, he was true as steel to his friends, always considerate of them, ever ready to think the best of them, to stand by them, and to place all the resources of his knowledge at their disposal. The qualities that made him the best of sons and brothers made him also the trustiest of friends. So it was that kindly hands of men whom he had drawn to him by his personal attractiveness nursed him with the tenderness and patience of a mother during his weary sickness, and a band of mourners accompanied his remains all the way from Cambridge to Aberdeen, and from Aberdeen to their final resting-place, amid

the scenes of his youth, in the remote valley of the Don.

It is impossible for one who had his friendship from the time when he entered the University of Aberdeen, and who was associated with him as a colleague in the College of the Free Church of Scotland in the white city of the North during years of controversy and trouble, to say at present all that might be said. Neither is this the time to attempt an estimate of his place in the ranks of theologians and scholars. The materials for that have yet in some measure to be gathered. All that is possible for the moment is to give the broad facts of his career, and a general statement of the work which earned him an honourable reputation extending far beyond his own land.

Like many more who have risen to eminence, William Robertson Smith was a son of the manse, and owed much to the wise and careful training of a frugal and pious home. He was born on the 8th November 1846 in the parish of Keig, on Donside, between twenty and thirty miles to the west of Aberdeen. It is a sweet and peaceful district, with a tranquil, sylvan beauty, the silver stream winding through it and the hills bending down upon it. To some it never shone with a more solemn fairness than on the April day when, with life bursting in tree and shrub, and the smiling sun making all things new, reverent hands from the venerable University of the South joined with those of Scottish friends and kindred in committing the body of a scholar and a brother to the grave in the quiet churchyard to which his steps had often taken him in his boyhood. He was the eldest son in a talented family, and received all his early instruction from his father, the Rev. William Pirie Smith, minister of the Free Church of Keig and Tough, a man of exemplary life and marked character, studious, and apt at teaching. From the quiet manse he went straight to the University of Aberdeen in 1861 along with a younger brother, George, who gave equal promise of distinction, but died prematurely. He belonged to a brilliant class, which included men like the late Professor Minto, and in which, consequently, the struggle for the first place was unusually severe. He stood first in the bursary competition, gained most things that were within his reach during his course, and on completing his curriculum in 1865 obtained the Town Council's gold medal awarded to the most distinguished graduate of the year. This was followed up by winning both the Fuller-



ton Scholarship and the Ferguson Scholarship in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. These successes were gained in spite of somewhat broken health. Thus he laid the foundations of a scholarship so exact, profound, and all-embracing that in after years it could in justice be said of him that he might have made the round of all the Chairs which the University possessed in Arts and Theology, and have occupied each of them in succession with distinction and with ease.

Having decided to devote himself to the Christian ministry in the Free Church of Scotland, he entered the New College, Edinburgh. Here he had the inestimable advantage of finding in Professor A. B. Davidson precisely the teacher whom he needed, under whose guidance his rare linguistic gifts were wisely directed, his love for Hebrew kindled, his mind opened to the meaning of the Old Testament revelation, and to the methods and movements of the new criticism. He carried everything before him there, and astonished his Professors by the range of his powers, his faculty of research, and the originality of his written work. He did this, too, while he acted as assistant to Professor Tait in the Chair of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, and was giving much of his attention to mathematical and philosophical questions. He prosecuted his theological studies also in Germany, spending some time at Bonn and Göttingen. He was specially attracted to Ewald and Ritschl, two teachers who influenced him deeply. Ewald gave him much to help him on in that insight into the genius of the Semitic literature and the message of the Old Testament, the beginnings of which were made under the teaching of Professor A. B. Davidson. Ritschl introduced him to a new form of theology and a new theological method, which impressed him greatly. He never indeed professed himself an out and out Ritschlian. There were deeper things in his own theology than Ritschl furnished. But he was in general sympathy with some of Ritschl's characteristic views, and especially with the professed object of his system, to construct an ethical rather than a metaphysical doctrine of God. During these student years, too, he began to use his pen to purpose. He wrote considerably, and on different subjects; papers on physical, philosophical, and theological questions, in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, the *British Quarterly Review*, and elsewhere.

Having finished his theological curriculum and taken every honour within his reach in the New College, in due time he received licence as a preacher. But he never held a pastoral charge. The Chair of Hebrew in the Free Church College, Aberdeen, became vacant by the death of Professor Marcus Sachs, a man greatly beloved and of high rank as a scholar, and the General Assembly of 1870 elected the young preacher to the Chair. The extraordinary brilliance of his career as a student had drawn the eyes of discerning men in his Church to him as one pre-eminently fitted for academic work. The feeling that the Church would do wisely if it placed him at the earliest opportunity in a position so congenial to himself, and so calculated to bring out his best gifts, was deepened by the proof which he had already given of his exceptional grasp of Old Testament questions. A paper which he contributed to the *British Quarterly Review* on "Prophecy in the Critical Schools of the Continent" exhibited an acquaintance with the critical method, an appreciation of the questions at issue, and a faculty of exposition which impressed those who read it with the conviction that the man and the Chair were meant for each other. As a Professor he at once made his power felt. He gave himself with the utmost enthusiasm to his work, and took the best of his students captive. He introduced them to new ways of looking at the Old Testament, and opened a new world of inquiry to them in his class lectures on the Prophets, standing all the while on the broad foundations of the evangelical faith. He had chosen for the subject of his Introductory Lecture the question, "What History teaches us to seek in the Bible." He had expressed in that lecture his intense sympathy with the Reformers, especially Luther and Calvin, at once in their doctrinal position and in their attitude to the Word of God; and in the free and reverent spirit of evangelical Protestantism, as he drew it from Scripture and the writings of the great Reformers, he continued to teach from the beginning to the end of his career.

In Aberdeen, meantime, he was busy with his pen as well as with his academic work. He wrote articles in various periodicals, on "Hebrew Poetry," the "Place of Theology in the Work and Growth of the Church," and kindred subjects. On the invitation of the editor he also contributed the articles "Angels" and "Bible," to which others were soon

added on "Canticles" and "Chronicles," to the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. For a time these articles attracted no more comment than is usually passed upon the work of a scholar. But suddenly all was changed. Strong words were spoken about the novel and dangerous statements made on the date, authorship, integrity, and character of certain books of Scripture in the article "Bible," and the attention of the College Committee was directed to the matter. To his own intense astonishment he was dragged into public notice, and made the centre of a controversy which painfully agitated the Church for years.

The controversy on which he was thus launched was destined to have an important influence on the religious life and thought of Scotland. The Free Church had to bear the brunt of the struggle between the old and the new ways of thinking, but the other Churches were also strongly affected by it. The history of that controversy deserves to be told at length. Its main points alone can be indicated here.

The statements most keenly resented were those on the Mosaic books, especially those which bore that the developed Levitical institutions belonged to a date long subsequent to the age of Moses, and that the Book of Deuteronomy was the work of some prophetic person who threw into "the form of a declaration and testimony by Moses" a series of oracles, "embracing at once Mosaic revelations, and modifications, or adaptations, which were of later development." The College Committee issued a Special Report, finding by a majority "no sufficient ground to support a process for heresy." This failed, however, to subdue the alarm, and "in view of the perplexity occasioned throughout the bounds of the Church," as the minute expressed it, the Commission of Assembly in March 1877 called the attention of the Presbytery of Aberdeen to the matter. After some preliminary action on the part of the Presbytery in the form of submitting certain queries to the Professor, the General Assembly took the matter in hand, instructed him to cease from discharging his duties as Professor for the time being, and directed the Presbytery of Aberdeen to proceed with the case according to the laws of the Church. Professor Smith in due time demanded to have the charges which were made against him reduced to definite form in a libel. Thereupon the party adverse to him drew up an elaborate instrument of indictment with alternative charges

under no less than eight heads, which occasioned protracted discussion in the Presbytery. In the debates which began at this stage and continued to engage the attention of the Church in Presbytery, Synod, and Assembly for several years, Professor Smith displayed powers of public speech which were a discovery to himself as well as to others. The case went to the Assembly of 1878 with a substantial verdict in his favour on all the gravest counts in the libel, and on that Assembly he made a profound impression by his admirable defence of himself and his manly vindication of liberty within the terms of the creed of his Church. The libel, however, had to go back to the Presbytery, with some changes, and again a majority of his brethren in that court stood by him. In the Assembly of 1879 the indictment against him was reduced to a single charge, that relating to the Book of Deuteronomy, and it was only by a majority of one in a crowded house that a motion was carried in favour of proceeding with this one count. The Assembly of 1880, by a majority of seven, resolved finally to withdraw the libel, declined to decide on the critical views in question by way of discipline, and left "the ultimate decision to future inquiry in the spirit of patience, humility, and brotherly charity." The Professor was restored to his Chair with an admonition to avoid cause of offence, and the protracted case, it was fondly believed, was ended.

The belief was soon rudely shattered. Besides the articles which had formed the subject of ecclesiastical procedure, Professor Smith had others in hand for the *Encyclopædia*. One of these, on "Hebrew Literature," which had been in type for some time, happened to be published after the decision in his favour. Advantage was taken of this to revive the agitation and reopen the case. The Assembly of 1881 was driven to take some action by the numerous and strongly worded representations which were sent up to it. The fear of a prolonged period of fresh trouble induced the middle party in the Church to combine with the extreme conservatives against those who stood for a regulated liberty, and to bring matters to a conclusion a motion was carried which, while avoiding judicial condemnation of the opinions in question, removed Professor Smith from his Chair on grounds of expediency. A motion of this kind could not have been carried but by the unexpected combination referred to, and that

combination could not have been thought of except under the pressure of the gravest concern for the unity and peace of the Church. All was done no doubt with a view to what was judged best for the Church at the time. But it was an extreme stretch of authority which strained the dutifulness of many in the Church then, and is a matter of painful regret still. Had it not been for the magnanimity of the deprived Professor himself, the consequences might have been serious. But he rose superior to all littleness, and exhibited a splendid loyalty to the Church that had misjudged him which infected others with its spirit. He was left in possession of the emoluments of his Chair, but these he refused to accept. His status also as a minister of the Church was not interfered with. He passed thus from the service to which he had been cordially called eleven years before. But he never ceased to retain an interest in it. To the end of his days he was eager to hear of all that concerned the college in which he began his work as a teacher.

His defeat, painful as it was to himself and to his many friends, was a real and permanent gain. The liberty for which he had contended was won. It was not strange that a large section of the Free Church was disturbed and panic-stricken by the views put forth by the young scholar on the books of Scripture. The criticism with which Germany was familiar was almost unknown to any of the Scottish Churches. Scotland was unprepared and taken by surprise. The marvel was that so many were found in the Free Church who could appreciate the new methods, and recognise at once that the incriminated opinions were not inconsistent with the authority of the Word of God or the confessional doctrine of Holy Scripture. The controversy was an education to the religious mind of Scotland, and the result was that it ceased to be possible to put inquiry into the literary history of Scripture in bonds, or to think of judicial processes in connexion with questions of the formation of the Levitical institutions, the structure of the Pentateuch, or the literary form of books like Deuteronomy and Jonah. Professor Smith himself made by far the largest contribution to the attainment of this result by the numerous speeches which he delivered, the masterly answers which he published to the libel, and the two courses of lectures which he gave in Edinburgh and Glasgow on the invitation of a large body of laymen. These lectures were subse-

quently issued as the volumes on *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* and on *The Prophets of Israel and their Place in History to the Close of the Eighth Century B.C.* These made a great impression on the public. They are books of great ability, remarkable for the easy grasp of masses of facts and the lucid exposition of difficult questions. The latter remains yet the best and most vivid statement in moderate compass on the subject of the Old Testament prophets.

On the termination of his connexion with the Aberdeen College, other spheres of usefulness were soon put in his way, some of which he was unable to accept. He was conjoined, however, with Professor Spencer Baynes in the editorship of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Subsequently he became sole editor, and had the satisfaction of bringing the great undertaking on which he had spent so much labour to a successful close. But Cambridge was destined to be his haven and the centre of his literary work for the rest of his life. By his studies at home and by travel in the East he had been enlarging his knowledge of Oriental languages, and when tidings came of the murder of Mr. E. H. Palmer in the desert, he was appointed to the Lord Almoner's Readership in Arabic—an easy post, which gave him at once ample leisure and rich opportunity. He was made a member of Trinity College, and afterwards a Fellow of Christ's. On the death of Mr. Henry Bradshaw, the eminent librarian to the University of Cambridge, he was elected to the vacant position. This he retained from 1886 to 1889, when, on the lamented decease of Professor Wright, he was appointed to the Professorship of Arabic, the last position which he held in the University of Cambridge. Nor were these the only honours which were bestowed upon him. Among other distinctions he received the honorary doctorate both from his own University and from that of Strassburg. He was also appointed to the important Burnett Lectureship in the University of Aberdeen. In connexion with this he delivered three courses of lectures, of which part are given in his volume on *The Religion of the Semites*, and part remain unpublished.

His literary activity was as intense as the subjects of his interest were various. His articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* alone make up a surprising mass of work of great importance and of wide range. He contributed largely also to *The Academy*, *The Journal of Philology*, *The Expositor*,

and other literary organs. He wrote not only on theology, Hebrew, and Oriental subjects, but on numbers, colours, antiquarian topics, and others. He gave much attention to questions of anthropology and primitive religious usage and belief, to totemism, marriage customs, and the like. His interesting volume on *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* is one of the fruits of these studies. His Burnett lectures contain much matter of a similar kind, and are otherwise remarkable for the elaborate exposition of the theory that the original idea of sacrifice was that of a meal partaken of in common by the tribesmen and the tribal deity. He has left behind him a multitude of articles and communications which are of too great value to be allowed to remain scattered among a multitude of journals and reviews. A collection of these will be a welcome addition to many a library.

His own theological position was that of the Reformers. The fault that he found with their successors, divines of the schools of Chemnitz, Turretin, Maestricht, and the followers of these in our own time, was that they had departed in large measure from the theology of the Reformers, and his object was to bring men back to the teaching of Luther and Calvin and Zwingli. He held the Reformation doctrine of justification with a firm conviction. With the Reformers he gave the first place in everything to grace, and took it to be the very essence of the Gospel that in it God first seeks man and makes the offer of His love to him. With the Reformers, too, he taught that faith is not mere assent to truth, but primarily and essentially personal trust, the acceptance of Christ Himself.

His criticism was from first to last a reverent and believing criticism. It was separated in its entire compass by his strong belief in the supernatural, in miracle and in prophecy, from the alien criticism with which it was at first ignorantly confounded. Revelation was to him not the communication of so much truth, but the entrance of God Himself into history and into man's life, the

direct personal message of God's love to man. The Bible he held to be the record of this personal revelation of God. He submitted himself to it as the Word of God in its substance and in all its parts. But he saw in it two things. He found in it a credible account of the historical origins of the Christian religion; and he found in it something more than that—a revelation of God Himself in His redeeming love. To these two things different kinds of evidence were appropriate. The first was established by the evidence which was applicable to all questions of historical veracity, and it formed the proper subject of a believing criticism. But the second had its evidence within. "If I am asked," he says, "why I receive Scripture as the Word of God and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer with all the fathers of the Protestant Church, 'Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us, in Him, His will for our salvation.' And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul."

The Word of God therefore stands above the operations of criticism, having its guarantee in its own intrinsic nature, its appeal to the soul, its attestation by the Holy Spirit. But a believing criticism which strives to understand the form in which this Word is conveyed to us should minister to the help and enlargement of faith, and to a better apprehension of the spiritual message of the Bible. And in Professor Robertson Smith's hands a criticism of this kind was used in the interest of faith. One great object of all that he wrote, and conspicuously in the case of his *Religion of the Semites*, was to show that the history of Israel and the genius of the Old Testament are unintelligible except on the supposition of the supernatural, and a special presence and work of God in them.