

THE BRITISH ACADEMY

The  
Text of the Old Testament

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## P R E F A C E

THE three lectures printed here and which were delivered in December, 1915, are a further development of the following ideas which I put forward in my book *Archaeology of the Old Testament*.

The books of the Old Testament are not in their original form. The earliest of them were written in Babylonian cuneiform, the later ones in Aramaic. Their present form was given them when the rabbis turned the books into the vernacular of Jerusalem, to which a new script, the square Hebrew, derived from Aramaic, was adapted. The Judaic dialect, written with that alphabet, is what we call Hebrew.

I do not wonder that, as Professor van Hoonacker says, these ideas have at present little success with the Biblical scholars, especially with the Higher Critics, who see their system attacked by an opponent who is by no means a Semitic scholar. My answer is that I have endeavoured to revert to sound historical principles. I have tried to test by history not only the commonly received opinions about the books of the Old Testament, but also the leading statements of the critics, their reconstruction of the literature of the Old Testament.

This has determined the plan of these lectures. I could grasp my subject only in the second, because, when I had to speak of the language in which the books of the Old Testament were composed, I had to begin by indicating which books I meant. For we stand before two conflicting conceptions. Either these books are those we know from tradition based on what they say, on their very words; or they are the books of the critics who have cut them in pieces, who assign to them totally different dates from those of tradition, and totally different authors from those whose names they bear. I had to explain why I could not accept the critical view, and why I should only consider the books such as they appear, taking the plain meaning of what they say. The systems of Higher Criticism do not seem to me in accordance with the principles of sound history, because in most cases its theories are not established by

real historical arguments, they rest on interpretations of certain difficulties, on explanations of a rather subjective character, but not on proved facts. These are the reasons which dictated my choice, and I was obliged to state them at the outset, but they could be only adumbrated in the short compass of a lecture.

Archaeology (and I mean by that word the work of the pick and the spade, the excavations made in various countries) has thrown a great amount of light on whole periods of antiquity, and has opened to us vast fields which before were absolutely unknown. In this respect, Egypt and Mesopotamia have been particularly fruitful. The great number of inscriptions and papyri discovered in these countries have enabled us to form a more correct idea of what the people were among whom arose the authors of the books of the Old Testament, and especially of the language in which they wrote.

The Hebrews were Mesopotamians. Their forefather Abraham left Haran, a Mesopotamian city, and settled in Canaan. We know now that in both countries the literary language was the same, it was Babylonian cuneiform, it was so in Palestine in the time of Moses and later on also, as the excavations have shown. The conclusion then which forces itself upon our mind is that the early books of the Hebrews, the books of Moses, were written in Babylonian cuneiform.

This conclusion has been put forward before me by Colonel Conder,<sup>1</sup> resting on arguments somewhat different from mine; but I believe I may claim the paternity of the following: it happened in Palestine as in Mesopotamia, that the people went over from Babylonian cuneiform to Aramaic by a kind of literary evolution chiefly occasioned by the invention of the Aramaic alphabet, a far more practical script for common use than cuneiform, which could be written only on wet clay. Aramaic, like Greek in the Hellenistic period, became more and more popular, it was more and more written and spoken, and therefore all the papyri and ostraca found at Elephantine are in Aramaic; the proper names only are in Hebrew.

The prophets wrote in Aramaic language with the Aramaic script. The Canaanite alphabet was not used for the sacred writings of the Hebrews, I mean here the true Jews, the inhabitants of Jerusalem

<sup>1</sup> It is only while I was writing this Preface that I at last succeeded in getting and reading Col. Conder's book.

and Judah, who belonged to the Southern kingdom, and not the ten tribes whose capital was Samaria and who adopted the Phoenician script under the influence of their half Phoenician princes, the worshippers of the Phoenician god Baal. This inference of the Canaanite alphabet being that of Samaria and not of Judah seems to me strongly supported by Sir Arthur Evans's discovery of the Cretan origin of that alphabet. As this discovery is very recent, I could not make use of it before, and one can now well understand why this alphabet, being imported by foreign tradesmen, could not be used by Isaiah or Jeremiah for writing down God's words. On the contrary the Samaritans, who had hostile feelings towards the Jews and their religion, would the more readily adopt that script, as it separated completely their books from those of the Hebrews.

The present language of the books, the Hebrew of the Bible, is the vernacular idiom of Jerusalem, which became a literary language when the Hebrews put it in writing and invented the square Hebrew. I do not know whether any one has put forward this idea before me, and I agree that it is somewhat startling and that it clashes with generally received opinions. At the end of my lectures, the Rev. Dr. Gaster argued that each of these books had its particular style and its particular words, and that this variety seemed to go against that characteristic and the date of Hebrew. Dr. Gaster's argument would have its full force if the change had been the other way, if these books had passed from the vernacular to the book language in its literary form. But here it is just the reverse. Instead of the literary Aramaic the rabbis turned the sacred writings into the language of the people, that which was heard at Jerusalem and spoken by all classes of the population, just as later on the authors of the books of the New Testament used also for their writings the popular language.

A change in that direction would, in my opinion, exactly produce the variety of style which may be noticed in the books. We cannot suppose that they were all translated by the same man; there may be also a difference of date. Individual men are like the leaves of a tree, there are not two of them perfectly alike, not even in their way of speaking which reflects their individuality, and which is not bound by the rules of literary language. Some have their favourite words, or they use more frequently certain turns of speech. In French the proverbial expression *parler comme un livre* (to speak like

a book) means to have lost the liberty of colloquial speech. Therefore, leaving the literary language for that of everyday life seems to me to introduce into the writing a variety which before was, if not unknown, at least very limited.

The change was merely dialectical, and it did not affect in the least the beauty of the style of the original. The people's language may sometimes rise to a high degree of beauty, it may produce very strong emotional effects, because it is the simple utterance of the heart's feelings, without any artificial and conventional ornament. The total absence of any studied eloquence gives to the writings of the Old Testament a character of genuineness and sincerity which adds to their tone of authority, while at the same time it appeals to our innermost feelings. For instance, can anything be more touching or move us more strongly than the pleading of Judah before Joseph in favour of his brother Benjamin; and this language is certainly the people's language which might even come out of the mouth of a child. Here also, as regards style, I do not see why the passage from the literary language to the vernacular should have debased in the least the tone of the writings, which went through it.

I have no doubt I shall be strongly assailed by the critics, and I cannot attempt to forestall their attacks. This is one of the reasons why I have kept to these lectures their original form and character. I did not make a book out of them, for that would have compelled me to enter into many discussions, and to argue at great length upon several points.<sup>1</sup> This, I could not do, having to encompass the whole subject into the space of three lectures. Several times I could only state my ideas, without supporting them by argument, though I have endeavoured to quote as often as I could the facts or the texts on which I relied, and to mention what I put forward as a conjecture.

In closing this preface, my last words must be to express to the British Academy my sincere thanks for having asked me to deliver these lectures, and thus having done me the honour of setting forth my ideas before a select audience of eminent scholars and hearers interested in questions concerning the Old Testament.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, I should have been obliged to say why I still adhere to Sir Arthur Evans's view on the Cretan origin of the Semitic alphabet, in opposition to Mr. Gardiner's lately published paper on the Egyptian origin of the same alphabet.

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## LECTURE I

### THE TEXT ACCORDING TO HIGHER CRITICISM

SINCE the rise of archaeology, our views with regard to ancient history, especially as to the origin of the nations of antiquity, have undergone a considerable change. Fifty years ago a Frenchman, Boucher de Perthes, in his researches on the alluvial deposits of the river Somme, was the first to draw attention to the flint instruments therein, and thus to lift a corner of the veil which had covered for many centuries prehistoric industry, the knowledge of which has since disclosed to us what was the origin of civilization.

Later, that enthusiastic admirer of Homer, the German Schliemann, by his excavations first at Troy and afterwards at Mycenae, laid bare to the astonished learned world the remains of the people whose great deeds, sung by the poet, were thus seen to be no mere creations of his imagination. A numerous band of scientific explorers of nearly all nations has considerably widened the field opened by Schliemann, so that we can now trace in the Eastern Mediterranean the Aegean civilization, which was absolutely unknown in our school days.

And this art, this civilization which was first discovered in Mycenae, where did it spring from? Sir Arthur Evans and his Italian and American followers have shown us where we are to look for its origin. Crete, the island of Minos and Daedalus, has been one of the first teachers of Europe and of our ancestors.

In this magnificent series of discoveries, has Israel had no part? Has the Holy Land contributed nothing to this abundant booty? In Palestine, the excavations have yielded interesting remains, but none of those great discoveries have been made which change the line hitherto followed by research. The history of the people of Israel, not that of Abraham's family, but of Israel as a nation, begins in Egypt. Now, curiously enough, the two chief discoveries, those of the Tel el Amarna tablets and the Elephantine papyri, the significance of which I should like to bring out in these lectures, were both made in Egypt.

People will say that these discoveries have a literary rather than an

archaeological character. No doubt, the questions they raise chiefly concern language. But if we consider what Israel has been, the part this nation has played in the world in the past, its influence even at the present day, in a word, its history from the day when Abraham left Mesopotamia, we shall find that it is entirely based on religion or belief, and that this religion, as well as the events which have marked the nation's career, are contained in the books of the Old Testament. It is not by its conquests, by its outward power, by its great monuments, by its art, by its refined civilization, that Israel has acted so powerfully on mankind: it is merely by the contents of its books. Its whole history is to be reconstructed from them, so that any question affecting those books may modify in certain respects the conception of its history.

Therefore we have to study these books in every way. Certainly, philological and textual criticism must be applied to them. In many cases their answers will be of primary importance. But they are not all. We have to consult the books themselves, to replace them in the circumstances and in the country in which they were written. For whom were they written, what was their plan and purpose? Where did the authors of them derive their information? This I should call internal evidence, but we must not neglect what comes in from outside. We previously mentioned the extraordinary changes brought about by archaeological research. This branch of learning is not our only help: anthropology, biology, natural science, botany, zoology, folklore, and very often what we see and hear at the present day, may lead us to the true interpretation of the ancient writings, and to a better understanding of the past.

These seem to me the sound principles on which real history is to be based. I should like to see students of antiquity revert to true, and, I may say, sound history, such as it has been admirably brought forward in other subjects than the Old Testament by a French writer, Fustel de Coulanges, whose book *La Cité Antique* is in my opinion the type of what historical research should be. I am happy to say he has now made disciples in France, and this school is becoming every day more prominent.

But when we come to study the history of Israel and the literature of the Old Testament, we find ourselves confronted with two quite contrary conceptions. One of them rests on a tradition of many centuries, and on the written word found in the books themselves. The other is that of the Higher Criticism, which has completely swept away tradition, and has raised a construction, or rather constructions of various forms, but with a common assumption as basis, viz. that

the names and dates given to the books of the Old Testament are not reliable, that with a few exceptions they are all erroneous, and that they must be replaced by authors discovered by the critics.

Thus we have at the outset to face Higher Criticism. We cannot treat in this lecture the whole question, which fills many books. Nor are we going to take the apologetic side in favour of tradition. We should like by a few examples to judge the Higher Criticism on its own merits, to weigh it impartially, to appraise its value, and to measure it with the same measure it has meted out to its opponents.

In this summary and very fragmentary description of the results of the Higher Criticism, I shall take as my guide one of the most eminent exponents of it in the English language, the late Dr. Briggs, a scholar who in all his discussions and arguments shows great respect for Holy Writ, but who at the same time is a convinced disciple of the Higher Critical School. He is sometimes liable to be carried away by his admiration, I should even say by his enthusiasm for the subject he has to defend, to strike up a paean of victory. Not only will its undisputed rule soon be finally established, not only will its opponents soon be spoken of as men of the past like the slave-owners, but, in Dr. Briggs's own words<sup>1</sup>: 'those who will insist upon opposing Higher Criticism with traditional views do not realize the perils of the situation. They seem to be so infatuated with inherited opinions that they are ready to risk the authority of the Bible upon their interpretation, . . . they would force critics to choose between truth and scholarly research on the one side, and tradition on the other. But there are many far better scholars who . . . will not be deterred from criticism themselves, or allow others to be deterred by those reactionary alarmists. The issue is plain, the result is not doubtful: the obstructionists will give way in this matter. Holy Scripture will vindicate itself against those who, like the friends of Job, have not spoken right concerning God in presuming to defend Him.'

The issue is plain, says Dr. Briggs. Higher Criticism alone will vindicate Scripture against the infatuated defenders of tradition. The result is not doubtful, but it has turned out to be just the contrary of what Dr. Briggs expected. I have no hesitation in saying that, apart from the religious point of view, nothing has shaken, I may even say shattered, the confidence of many in the authority of Scripture so completely as Higher Criticism. Readers of the numerous books which appear every year, especially in Germany, on the ancient

<sup>1</sup> *The Study of Holy Scripture*, p. 273. In this quotation I have left out the words which have a purely religious bearing.

history of the East, or on any subject connected with the Old Testament, will easily see what remains of this authority.

Let us now apply our criticism to the work of the Higher Critics and see what we are to think of their results, which they assert to be established beyond discussion. Let us judge them with the judgment with which they judge others, taking heed not to use expressions which they have not used themselves.

The following is their description of the books of the Old Testament: 'There are but few biblical writings which can be regarded as the product of one mind, as an organic whole. And few of these have remained without interpolations which may be easily detected. None of the historical books of the Old Testament can be assigned here. The only prophetic writings which are certainly the products of one author at one time are Joel, Jonah, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi.'<sup>1</sup> Certainly a very small number, five out of thirty-nine, one of which, Malachi, is often called pseudonymous.

'There are a large number of the biblical books that are anonymous: the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Jonah, Ruth, many of the Psalms, Lamentations.'<sup>2</sup> If we look at this list, we see that some of these books, like portions of the Pentateuch, Joshua, and a great number of Psalms, are not anonymous, but what Dr. Briggs calls pseudonymous, among which he quotes Ecclesiastes and Daniel. Whatever name is applied to these books, 'it may be regarded as *the certain result of the science of Higher Criticism* that Moses did not write the Pentateuch or Job, Ezra did not write the Chronicles, Ezra, or Nehemiah. Jeremiah did not write the Kings or Lamentations, David did not write the Psalter, but only a few of the Psalms. Solomon did not write the Song of Songs or Ecclesiastes, and only a portion of Proverbs. Isaiah did not write half of the book that bears his name. The great mass of the Old Testament was written by authors whose names and connexion with their writings are lost in oblivion.'<sup>3</sup>

Thus the whole literature of the Old Testament is a collection of books, the great majority of which are anonymous or pseudonymous. On this magnificent construction which, the more you study it, the more it excites your admiration, you see inscribed in golden letters the names of those who have been its builders, and you repeat those names with veneration. We must however undeceive you, say the Higher Critics, those names are for the most part a mere fallacy, many

<sup>1</sup> Briggs, *loc. cit.*, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> Briggs, *loc. cit.*, p. 319.

<sup>3</sup> Briggs, *loc. cit.*, p. 287.

of these men had nothing to do with the construction, which was the work of a great number of builders about whose names, work, and date we know absolutely nothing.

Allow me to look at the theory in the light of an argument which is too often left entirely aside: I mean common sense. You may admit that a work like the *Nibelungen* is anonymous. Generally the authors of popular songs, except those of very recent date, are unknown. For a long time Homer has been considered by the followers of Wolff as an aggregate of songs of a great many poets, of none of whom the origin or name could be quoted. This idea, very popular in the various fields of antiquity, is more and more attacked by the school I was speaking of; nevertheless its cogency can well be understood in reference to a single work of a special character.

But here we have to do with a whole literature with—who knows?—perhaps thirty or more authors, who have been writing during eight or nine centuries, some of them on the same book at an interval of several centuries, a book which had received a conventional name. And during all this time, for all these books, a rule has been rigidly observed, viz. that no trace should remain of the name and residence of their authors and the circumstances under which they wrote, and not the faintest record left concerning these writers. Can you quote another instance of a literature of a similar kind, and can you imagine such an intense literary activity remaining absolutely hidden under the most various circumstances, alike in the Northern and Southern kingdoms, in Babylon or in the troubled Maccabæan times?

Higher Criticism is a system, a theory, and we are now going to apply to it the test of what we call sound historical criticism, we shall put to the proof the solidity of some of its arguments, the strength of its constructions. We shall not oppose one hypothesis to another, but merely use the same process the Higher Critics have applied to the Old Testament: we shall dissect the books they present to us and use their microscope. Naturally we cannot deal with the whole ground covered by their researches: we shall select only one corner of their extensive field, that on which Higher Criticism began its destructive work, that on which it has brought to bear most completely its most characteristic methods—I mean the Pentateuch.

Higher Criticism originated with Astruc, a French physician, who in 1753 was the first to present to the learned world his discovery that the use of the divine names, Elohim and Jehovah, or, as it is now pronounced, Jahveh, divided the book of Genesis into two great memoirs and nine lesser ones. After Astruc, a German scholar, Eichhorn, came to similar conclusions. He was the first to call his

method of research Higher Criticism, different from Lower Criticism, which deals with the text of the Scriptures. Higher Criticism builds on Lower Criticism as its foundation.

Eichhorn is quite independent of Astruc. He says himself that Astruc, a celebrated medical man, has done what until then no professional critic had ventured to do, viz. divide the whole of Genesis into fragments. These are his words: 'I also have begun the same inquiry, but in order that my own point of view may in no wise deviate, I have not taken Astruc as my guide and companion.'<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Briggs calls Eichhorn 'a true and manly scholar, the father of the Higher Criticism'. 'He carried his methods into the entire Old Testament with the hand of a master and laid the foundation of views that have been maintained ever since with increasing determination. He did not always grasp the truth, . . . he could not transcend the limits of his age.'<sup>2</sup> Whoever reads Eichhorn will see how widely the Higher Critics of the present day have diverged from the man whom they adopt as their father. It is impossible not to call their view of tradition the opposite of that of Eichhorn. He maintains with energy, for instance, that the four legislative books of the Pentateuch are due to Moses, an idea which Dr. Briggs calls unscholarly and absurd, and we may judge of what he would think of the hypotheses of the present day by what he says of one of them which has many supporters, the attribution to Ezra of the authorship of the Priestly Code, which contains nearly the whole of the ceremonial laws. Speaking of the legislative books, he says: 'To consider Ezra as the author of a part or the whole of these books, one must either ignore their spirit, their contents and their history, or one must decide only to ridicule the world or human intellect.'<sup>3</sup>

These are the words of the father of Higher Criticism.

Higher Criticism consists of two different parts, a negative and a positive, a destructive element and a constructive one. There is no doubt that the destructive part has been the dominant one, the most complete. It pretends to have swept away tradition nearly entirely, and new scholars are constantly endeavouring to wipe off the scanty remains of it which have been left.

'Tradition is the bastard of history,' says Dr. Briggs, and should be resorted to only when we have no history.<sup>4</sup> Thus all legitimacy is denied to tradition; it is only a makeshift to which we have to resort when there is nothing better. In this case tradition must be put aside, for we have at hand history such as it has been constructed

<sup>1</sup> *Einl. ins Alte Testament*, ii. 247.

<sup>2</sup> Briggs, *loc. cit.*, pp. 280-1.

<sup>3</sup> Eichhorn, *loc. cit.*, p. 229.

<sup>4</sup> Briggs, *loc. cit.*, p. 479.

by the critics. If this is the principle of the school, it is natural that its primary work should have consisted in the destruction of tradition; and here we have not to do with oral tradition, with recollections transmitted from father to son, sometimes through several generations. We have before us written statements, books which for centuries have been attributed to certain authors, and some of which, for instance, three of the books of the Pentateuch, have the signature of their authors. Now, Higher Criticism maintains that none of the signatures are genuine, that in most cases these writings belong to quite a different time, that there are very few books, even among the prophets, which are throughout the work of the men who are said to be the authors; in a word, the whole history of the Old Testament has to be recast and made afresh, since a few books only can be called genuine, that is, due to the men whose name they bear.

I have no hesitation in saying that to establish, even to prove that, though a book bears the name of an author and has been attributed to him, it is not his work, is an easy achievement. Take an author who has produced a good deal, who has lived long, and who has written under various circumstances; the changes which he has seen or experienced in his own person, the events of which he was a witness, the diversity of his environment, all this may have influenced his mind, his opinions, his convictions, his style, so that probably it will not be difficult to find disagreements or even contradictions in his writings. Add to these the turn of mind of the critic, his special point of view, his literary taste, and in many cases some preconceived notions which determine his interpretation of the text, and he will triumphantly assert that this passage is spurious and that book not genuine.

Now supposing it has been established by arguments which the critic considers as sufficient that a book, assumed to be by some famous author, has been wrongly attributed to him and must be struck out of the list of his works, the scholar is still only half way in his research, and by far the easier half. What is far more difficult is the second part of his task: it is to show why the book has been attributed to this author, by whom his name was first fastened to it, under what circumstances and for what reason. How is it that his name has always been connected with that work? What will you put in the place of the tradition which you have brushed away? You will probably have some suggestions to make, you have your own ideas about it, but that is not enough. If you wish, as you pretend to do, to replace tradition by history, you must bring something else than your explanations. Evidence is required, not mere surmise or conjecture derived from preconceived notions.

Here, over and over again, the critic is found wanting. Here he presents us with what I should call his romance. Tradition can be upset only by solid proofs, because tradition is not, as Dr. Briggs says, the bastard of history, it very often *is* history, the only history we have, which may have been modified and disfigured in the course of time, but which has to be accepted until it is proved to be erroneous.

Higher Critics have devoted most of their efforts to the destructive work, the wiping away of tradition in regard to the authorship of most of the books of the Old Testament, and in this respect only have they succeeded in obtaining a sort of general agreement. For instance, in the Pentateuch, or, as it is now called, the Hexateuch since Joshua is added to it, Moses is completely banished as a writer. He is not the author of any of the books that bear his signature, and still less of those that are anonymous, like Genesis.

The destructive side of Higher Criticism is so prominent that it is doubtful whether it would admit any other inference. Higher Criticism has no right to prejudice the result of a research made conscientiously and based on sound principles. Nevertheless, supposing that, studying the history of Joseph in the light of the Egyptian monuments, a scholar should come to the conclusion that this history must have been written in Egypt, by a man who, like Moses, knew Egypt thoroughly well, who was acquainted with the Hebrews staying there as well as with the court, supposing, I say, this conclusion is well established, it will not be called Higher Criticism because, instead of being destructive of tradition, it has proved its historical character.

Let us now look at the constructive side of Higher Criticism. Let us review some of the books and some of the authors it has called into existence, adopting exactly its principles and methods, and in this research sitting at the feet of its masters.

Higher Criticism began with Genesis, with the idea that the use of the two different names of God, Jehovah or rather Jahveh, which the Greeks translate *Κύριος* and we 'the Lord', and Elohim, *Θεός* 'God', implied different authors, and that the book had to be divided on that principle. Following Astruc, Eichhorn recognized in Genesis two documents, the *Elohists*, using the name of Elohim for God, and the *Jahvist* whom he called Jehovist, always using the name of Jahveh. But he admitted three and possibly five inserted texts which could not be included in either of these two documents. The most important are chaps. ii and iii, the creation of man, which uses Jahveh Elohim, the Lord God; chap. xiv, the expedition of the kings of Mesopotamia,



which to him is extraneous matter unconnected with the book; chap. xxxvi, the genealogy of Esau's family. The two insertions which he considers as doubtful are chaps. xxxiii and xxxiv, the episode of Dinah, and xlix, the blessing of Jacob to his sons. These five pieces excepted, the whole book consists of the two documents, which can be easily separated and distinguished.

Eichhorn's disciples have gone a great deal further. If we take the generally accepted system of Socin and Kautzsch, out of which has been made the Genesis in colour or 'rainbow Genesis', we see that the book consists of 264 fragments pieced together. These fragments are selected here and there from the work of six different authors, with the addition of glosses of later time. A first document, called J<sup>1</sup>, is said to be an earlier source of the Jahvist; very few fragments are attributed to it: the genealogy of Cain's family, the history of the tower of Babel, and Jacob's blessing to his sons. The *Jahvist* or *Judaic* document, called J, is supposed to come from the Southern kingdom; its date is generally considered to be the ninth century. A hundred years later arose the *Elohistic* or *Ephraimitic* document called E, coming from the Northern kingdom, and written in the eighth century. A fourth document is called J E, certain scholars call it *Prophetical Narrative*, in which the Judaic and Ephraimitic documents are so intimately fused that they cannot be separated by literary analysis. A very important document is the *Priestly Code* P, which came from Babylon in the fifth century. Wellhausen gives as its date the year 444. It is not very prominent in Genesis, but much more in the following books. The whole of Leviticus is derived from it. Chap. xiv of Genesis is a document apart, which is considered as unconnected with the following. Lastly comes the *redactor*, who pieced all these fragments together and made a book out of them, adding here and there a good deal out of his own wisdom. Altogether, seven different authors, four of whom, the Judaic, the Ephraimitic, the Prophetic, and the Priestly Code, are the most important. The redactor must have completed his work in the fourth century, after the Priestly Code and before the translation of the Septuagint, which was begun in 280, and very probably with the Law.

These seven documents are not all which are admitted by the critics to have been the constitutive elements of the Hexateuch. If we turn to the last book, Joshua, such as it is shown to us in the polychrome Bible, we see that their number has increased. There are two Jahvists and also two Elohistes, for each of them an earlier and a later one; beginning a century after. In the same way there are two Priestly

Codes, the first about 500 B.C.; the second from 440-409, and two J E. Besides, there is a class of documents which do not appear in Genesis: the *Deuteronomistic writers*, writing in the spirit of Deuteronomy, a book which came to light in 621 under the reign of Josiah.

I revert to Genesis, and I shall leave aside literary arguments, such as the question whether the history of Joseph could have been written as it is described by the Higher Critics. I only wish to refer to one example, in which you will agree with me that ordinary common sense and elementary literary taste must revolt against what is presented to us as the last word of critical science: I mean the beautiful chapter *xlvi*, where the visit of Joseph to his father is described, when the dying patriarch, whose eyes are dim for age, blesses his two grandsons.

In reading this chapter, you have probably admired the simplicity and beauty of the scene: the old man, speaking with the infirmity of age, sometimes repeating himself, or reverting to a recollection of the past, to the burial of his beloved wife Rachel, whose son is before him. Certainly the author of this chapter could only be an eminent literary artist, capable of impressing his readers by his simplicity and the complete absence of any artificial ornament.

But mark this: if you believe in the existence of this one author (I shall use Dr. Briggs's words), you are a scholastic and a traditionalist, and if you call this author Moses, you are decidedly un-scholarly. Higher Criticism alone will tell you the truth and teach you how this chapter was written. It consists of twelve fragments of four different authors ranging from the ninth to the fourth century. I cannot go over the whole chapter; I shall only take a few verses, beginning with the eighth: 'And Israel beheld Joseph's sons.' These five words are of the Jahvist, written in the ninth century. Why? Because the episode in which Jacob wrestles during a whole night with a man and receives the name of Israel is said to be Jahvist by the present scholars, contrary to Eichhorn's opinion. After these five words, we go down a century later with the end of the sentence 'and said: Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father: They are my sons, whom Elohim hath given me here'. These words are of the Elohist writer, since it is Elohim who gave Joseph his sons. After that we go back to the Jahvist: 'And he said: Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them; Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see.' Jahvist, because of the name of Israel. The Elohist again: 'And he brought them near unto him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said unto

Joseph: I had not thought to see thy face, and lo, Elohim hath let me see thy seed also.' There is an error here in the Elohist, he calls Jacob 'Israel'; one cannot admit that, it is against the theory. Therefore Israel in this sentence is a correction of the redactor in the fourth century.

I wish I could have gone through the whole chapter, or other chapters like xv. I believe these few verses, however, will be sufficient to show what kind of composition has been invented by Higher Criticism, and I dare say you will agree with me that (to employ again Dr. Briggs's words) in this case absurdity is not on the side of tradition.

The learned divine teaches us that the Higher Criticism has the following line of evidence upon which it relies for its conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

'The writing must be in accordance with its supposed historical position as to time, place, and circumstances.' Let us now test, according to this principle, some of the books of the six authors who have been fused together in Genesis. But before this, there is a preliminary question. Every book must have an author. Is there any evidence of the existence of these authors, I mean any evidence such as would satisfy a lawyer? Can you tell us anything about them, their names, the places where they were born, the tribes to which they belonged, the events in which they took part, how many books they wrote, and for whom; if they had a definite purpose in writing, or a fixed plan? To all these questions you have absolutely no answer. You have not the slightest historical evidence about these writers.

You will protest that you have sufficient evidence in the books themselves, in certain words, repetitions, statements, which do not agree, lack of congruence, in all those literary discrepancies which you submit to a kind of microscopic analysis, from which you draw inferences which you call history. But these inferences are only interpretations of these various difficulties, certainly not established historical facts. The proof of it is that critics disagree as to these authors, as to their number and dates. We have seen that where Kautzsch and Socin suppose one Elohist and one Jahvist, Dr. Haupt supposes two succeeding each other in different centuries. Others, I believe, bring forward even more. If once it be admitted that such literary circumstances justify the assumption of the existence of a separate author, there is no reason why their number should not vary according to every critic's interpretation of the text.

<sup>1</sup> *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. 2.

According to Professor Skinner, the two main sources of the Pentateuch are the Priestly Code and the Jahvistic document. The Priestly Code, according to the learned Cambridge professor, is 'more obviously than J and E the production of a school, in this case a school of juristic writers whose main task was to systematize the mass of ritual regulations which had accumulated in the hands of the Jerusalem priesthood, and to develop a theory of religion which grew out of them. . . . That religion expresses the spirit of the Priestly School: the exclusive emphasis on the formal or institutional aspect of religion, which is the natural proclivity of a sacerdotal caste, appears in a very pronounced fashion, . . . every practice to which a religious value is attached is referred to a direct command of God. In the deeper problems of religion, on the other hand, such as the origin of evil, the writer evinces no interest; and of personal piety—the disposition of the heart towards God—his narrative hardly furnishes us an illustration. . . . The style reflects the qualities of the legal mind, in its stereotyped terminology, its aim at precise and exhaustive statement, its monotonous repetitions. . . . It is necessary to read the whole work consecutively in order to realize the full effect of the laboured diffuseness, the dry lucidity, and prosaic monotony of this characteristic product of the Priestly School of writers. On the other hand, the style is markedly deficient in the higher elements of literature.'<sup>1</sup> The date of the school is post-exilian, it is between 444 and 432.

Does not that sound like the description of a well-known school of writers whose names are familiar, and whose authorship of certain works is well established? But there is nothing of the kind, there is absolutely no evidence of the existence of that school, it is a complete creation of the critics. The only basis on which it rests is the grouping of certain parts of the Pentateuch, and the interpretation given to these fragments, viz. the institution of theocracy among the post-exilian Jews. But there is more. To the Code belongs the Cosmogony (Gen. i-ii), the list of patriarchs from Adam to Noah, and other genealogies. In this case there is one of the breaks now frequently made in Astruc's and Eichhorn's theory of the Elohist and the Jahvist. The first chapter of Genesis is completely Elohist, nevertheless it is now attributed to the Priestly Code.

We have here an example of a kind of criticism found in a considerable number of German historical and philological works, and to which I do not know what name to give. I might perhaps call it

<sup>1</sup> Skinner, *Genesis*, pp. lvii-lxiii.

the 'interpretation system'. The principle of the system is this: the texts are not to be taken in their obvious and clear sense; they have a hidden meaning or hidden purpose which is revealed by the critic, and which is the interpretation he gives of the text in accordance with his own ideas. In order to support this interpretation, it is necessary to imagine a fact or suppose the existence of a man or school, of which there is no historical evidence and which cannot be established by real arguments. Nevertheless, this new creation is so completely identified with history, its historical value is so well recognized, that the critic takes it as a solid basis, so that the contrary opinion, derived from the plain meaning of the text, becomes for him a hypothesis.

Take a book of laws like Leviticus. It ends with these words: 'These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai.' This is clear enough. These commandments have been dictated to Moses, and constantly we find this expression recurring: 'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: Command the children of Israel,' or something similar. Whatever explanation you give of these words, 'The Lord spake unto Moses' or 'The Lord commanded him', there is no doubt that Moses is regarded as the man who is spoken to or who receives the command. The plain sense of these words is that those laws date from the time of Moses, and were enacted by him.

But this, although it is an often repeated, written statement, would be tradition, and not the new form of history, which is embodied in the system of the critics. Bringing together this book with other fragments of the Pentateuch, and cutting out of its five books all the fragments which have a juristic character, where the ritual is said to be a command of God, and then adding to it a few historical fragments in which 'the writer's imagination is of the mechanical type' in spite of occasional 'impressive dignity', this is how a group of a well-marked character is formed, which can have for its author only a sacerdotal school, the aim of which is to enforce on the post-exilic Jews the institution of theocracy. The name of Moses, so often repeated, is only inserted to give authority to these laws. There is no historical evidence whatever as to the existence of such a school: it and the description of it are entirely derived from the construction put on this group of texts. And yet we are told that its existence and action cannot be doubted, and that it is so certain, that the idea that Moses could be the author of the laws is now a mere supposition—the Mosaic hypothesis, as it is called.

We have seen that one of the main principles of Higher Criticism

is that a writing must be in accordance with its supposed historical position as to time and circumstances. Let us see how the theory about the Priestly Code agrees with this principle.

The laws of the Priestly Code are chiefly ceremonial, ritualistic; one may suppose, therefore, that they are destined to regulate the worship of the people to whom they are addressed. These were the Jews who had returned from the Exile, and who had rebuilt or were rebuilding their temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. But what do we find in the Priestly Code? No mention of the temple, or even of Jerusalem; it is not even supposed that a temple would ever be built. The whole Code centres on the Ark of the Covenant and the Tabernacle, which had both disappeared, for there was no Ark in the rebuilt Temple. So that the rules which are to bind the Jews apply to a form of worship totally different.

The sacerdotal school is said to wish to enforce upon the Jews certain religious institutions and certain rites. How can that result be obtained by a detailed description of the Ark of the Covenant and of the Tabernacle, both movable things which could be carried away when the people changed their camps? And the description is not imaginary, produced by the author's fancy, it is strictly in conformity with what might be expected from Egyptian industry, and with the materials found in the desert. What interest would this description, even made with an accurate archaeological knowledge, have for the post-exilic Jews?

One can understand that if these laws existed from a great antiquity, when Solomon built his temple he did not enact new ones, that he endeavoured to carry out the worship as well as he could according to the ordinances given by Moses. But if these laws did not exist, if they had to be written out afresh, can we imagine a sacerdotal legislator reviving a state of things absolutely different from the present and which had disappeared long ago? It seems that the Jews, hearing or reading this code, far from submitting to it, would much rather have turned away, saying that it might have been good for their forefathers, but certainly not for them. Therefore we cannot admit that the Priestly Code fulfils one of the principal requisites of Higher Criticism: its historical position is certainly not in accordance with the circumstances of the time when it is supposed to have made its appearance.

We might add other things which seem to be grave inconsistencies. What has the creation of the world to do with ceremonial laws? with genealogies, or the historical fragments which are attributed to the Priestly Code in Genesis? The book must have had a plan. If

it was historical, it is certainly curious that it should stop with Joshua, and that it should take no interest in the subsequent history of the nation for seven or eight centuries. If on the contrary it is strictly legal, written to enforce religious laws on the post-exilian Jews in the new temple, how is it that it takes no account of Deuteronomy? There was, we are told, a religious reform carried out in the temple in the year 621 in the name of Moses; there, for the first time, the critics add, the unity of the sanctuary was prescribed, and the post-exilian reformers, instead of drawing from this temple reform the religious prescriptions which they wished to enforce, went back to the Ark and the Tabernacle. Surely, this again is far from being in harmony with the circumstances of the time.

Time does not allow me to go through each of the component books of Genesis and to point out how far they fulfil the conditions which Higher Criticism has laid down as necessary to real history. I can only take one or two examples, studying each of them from one point of view.

J and E, the Judaic author of the ninth century and the Ephraimistic author of the eighth, are the two main sources for the history of Joseph, that is from the time of his arrival into Egypt until that of his father, for we have seen that the last chapters are cut up into small fragments. These two authors in Genesis must have written concerning Joseph two parallel and very similar narratives. They are both also the authors of other parts of the Pentateuch. Like all the creations of Higher Criticism, they are absolutely unknown and nameless, which is rather extraordinary considering what they have done. They have both fallen into complete oblivion. However, some of their contemporaries are known, and their works have been preserved under their name. The eighth century, time of E the Elohist, is that of several prophets, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah himself; we know their works, their names, and in the case of some of them, their parentage and various circumstances of their lives. How is it that the man who wrote, not only the life of one of the heroes of the Hebrews, Joseph, but, according to the Higher Critics, was the first to put in writing the Ten Commandments, the foundation of the moral law,—how is it that as a person he has entirely disappeared? For we cannot admit that he wrote only the fragments which are pieced together with those of J and others. From the time when he wrote to that of the redactor, who cut fragments out of his work in order to compose Genesis, for about four hundred years, his work must have existed as an independent production, and I can hardly think it was anonymous. What became of it after the redactor had made use of it? The same questions may

be asked about the Jahvist, who also had prophets, like Joel, as his contemporaries.

Concerning those two authors who wrote so much about events which occurred in Egypt many centuries before, I should like to repeat a question I have asked elsewhere. Where did they get the information they give us of that country? Had two men, living one in Judah in the ninth century and one in the Northern kingdom in the eighth, the necessary material for writing the history of Joseph which they have left us?

I have no hesitation in saying in the most emphatic way that it is not possible. Joseph rose to the high position he occupied during the reign of the last Hyksos kings, the dynasty of Shepherds who were an abomination unto the Egyptians. Very soon after Joseph's death the foreigners were driven out, and the native dynasty was restored. Egyptian inscriptions teach us what was done to wipe away the traces of the aliens. And certainly no remembrance was kept of one of their ministers who could not be popular, owing to the way he treated the landowners during the famine. Besides, Joseph was not a king, he was a subject. All the information which we have about great men in Egypt comes from their tombs, from the painted or sculptured inscriptions which decorate the walls of them, or from stelae deposited in them, or from statues which were often dedicated in temples. On these stelae and statues, in honour of the person for whom they are engraved or whom they represent, there are sometimes a few details about the events in which he took part, but in the greater part of the inscription he is made to indulge in a boastful eulogy of his own person, of his qualities and of his great deeds, and to repeat over and over again the favours which he received from the king. We can be quite sure that such a statue of Joseph was never dedicated to him in an Egyptian temple, and moreover that he had no sculptured tomb enclosing a funerary stele where the deeds of his life were inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphs. We know that he was mummified in Egyptian fashion, but he took an oath of the children of Israel that they should carry up his bones from Egypt; that does not sound like his wishing to have a rock-cut tomb.

The only recollection of Joseph would be that which survived in the memory of his countrymen in Egypt. He must have been their great man, greater even than Abraham, for he was the cause of their coming to Egypt; he had disposed the king favourably towards their ancestor, the part of the country where they could graze their cattle had been allotted to them, they had prospered and increased in number, even under the native dynasty which had come to the throne.



Joseph must certainly have been their hero, and the tradition about his life could not fail to have been very vivid among his countrymen in Egypt.

But what could an inhabitant of Juda in the ninth century, or one of the Northern Kingdom in the eighth, know of Joseph, except the main outlines of his life which may have been preserved by a tradition through six and more centuries? He might have known that Joseph, a Hebrew of their nation, who had been sold as a slave, had risen to a marvellous position, that he had become the second man in the kingdom, that he had caused all his family to stay in Egypt, from which country they had been brought out after a dreadful persecution. But the thoroughly Egyptian details which are characteristic of the narrative, the Egyptian names and words, the acquaintance with the customs and certain features of the country, such as Joseph dying at the age of 110 years, which according to Egyptian ideas was the limit of old age, all this, which oral tradition does not and cannot preserve, he could not have, even if he had gone to Egypt, where he would have found no record of Joseph.

Here again, testing the writing of the Jahvist and the Elohist by the principles of Higher Criticism, we find that its historical position is by no means in accordance with circumstances, since the author could not possibly have the information such as is contained in the books.

I shall only add here that, judging the Egyptian part of Genesis in the light of the Egyptian monuments, it seems clear that this narrative can only have been written in Egypt, by a man like Moses, who was a Hebrew, and who had access to the court of Pharaoh. Moses has written not only the Egyptian part, but the whole of Genesis, as it is maintained by tradition. There are several Mosaic touches which reveal the man who wrote in Egypt and who had Egypt before his eyes. I have no time to dwell, as I have done elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> on these striking pieces of evidence of the Mosaic authorship of Genesis. You will agree with me that this kind of argument is not to be repudiated, nevertheless this is the way it is judged by an eminent critic of Germany, Professor Koenig: 'It is unmethodical to scatter by the way such isolated passages throughout an investigation, in order to arouse suspicion against a great conviction, the new theory as to the Pentateuch.'<sup>2</sup>

Let us now apply the principles of Higher Criticism to one more of the supposed constituents of Genesis, one of the most important,

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeology of the Old Testament*, pp. 65 and ff.

<sup>2</sup> *The Expositor*, 1914, September, p. 211.

the redactor who put in their place the 264 fragments he had chosen and gave a frame to the whole composition. Genesis has a very definite plan, which is admirably worked out from beginning to end. Could the redactor, with these disjointed fragments, taken from books having each its own purpose and tendency, write a work, the plan of which is so clearly marked, and was this plan in harmony with the circumstances in which the author is supposed to have produced his work?

Professor Skinner states that it is an error to confuse unity of plan with unity of authorship;<sup>1</sup> 'The view generally held,' says the learned professor, 'reconciles the assumption of a diversity of sources with the indisputable fact of a clearly designed arrangement of the material, . . . the whole converges steadily on the line of descent from which Israel sprang, and which determined its providential position among the nations of the world.' We agree with this last sentence. In our opinion, Genesis is not properly a historical book, it is the collection of the titles of nobility of Israel; from beginning to end it shows that Israel is a people set apart, with whom God has made a covenant, who has received the promise that they shall inherit the land of Canaan and would be like the stars of heaven. The special mission of Israel is to be worshippers of Jahveh, to whom they must remain faithful.

This is certainly a glorious past and a glorious future, according to Higher Criticism, but who is it who says so? Who is the man who speaks in God's name and who vouches for the fulfilment of God's promise? From whom has he received the authority to hold such language? The redactor is a man absolutely unknown, living in the time when, after the return from captivity, the Israelites could hardly be said to be independent, and were constantly struggling against foreign invaders or oppressors. He may have lived in Palestine or taken refuge, with a great number of his countrymen, on the banks of the Nile. A book like Genesis is destined to have some influence on its readers or hearers. But when these men compared the magnificent promises made to Abraham and the present condition of their country, those promises must have appeared to them a cruel irony and a record of baffled hopes. They were much more likely to turn a deaf ear to his words, than to feel encouraged to hope against the most gloomy appearances.

Besides, this redactor was not a prophet, he was not speaking as a man inspired by the spirit of God, he was a mere recorder, and if he had been asked how he knew anything about Abraham, he could

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis*, Introd., p. xxxii.

only have answered that he had consulted an author who wrote part of his biography, about the same time when Joel the prophet lived, and another who lived a hundred years later. This is certainly not the necessary authority to write a book like Genesis, which is the first charter of the covenant of God with His people. Certainly as regards time and author, both were as little appropriate as possible to the composition of a book like Genesis. So that once more we see the requirements of Higher Criticism are not found in one of its creations.

We shall take only one more example, from the Pentateuch also, but not from Genesis : Deuteronomy. As for this book, the critics are nearly unanimous in stating that it is the copy of the law which is said to have been found in the time of Josiah by Hilkiah the high priest, when great repairs were being made in the temple. Hilkiah gave it to Shaphan, the scribe of the king, who read it to the sovereign, and the king was so strongly impressed by what he heard that he immediately caused a great reform to be made on the lines of Deuteronomy.

The critics differ as to the date when this book was written. Those who are respectful of Holy Writ, like Dr. Driver or Westphal, assign it to the end of the reign of Manasseh, when some priest, grieved at the sight of the reigning idolatry, wrote the book, the words of which he put into the mouth of Moses, and hid it in the temple with the hope that some day it might be found and that some good might come out of it. Those who are hostile to Scripture do not hesitate to call it a forgery, which they attribute to the priests who intended, with the aid of the king, to produce a strong reaction in their favour.

The respectful critics protest strongly against the word 'forgery', and this is natural, because this word alone destroys their contention that Higher Criticism is the best and only way of vindicating the authority of Scripture. Dr. Briggs says that no reputable critic ventures to write of any of our canonical books as forgeries.<sup>1</sup> I am afraid, as to the word, that I am obliged to say the hostile critics are right. The book begins thus: 'These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel beyond Jordan, . . . beyond Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare the law, saying: The Lord our God spake unto us.' Moses addresses the Israelites in the first person: 'I command you, . . . the Lord said unto me, . . . I sent messengers.' Occasionally, as in chap. xxvii and the following, he is introduced in the third person, but then his words are reported as directly addressed to the people: <sup>2</sup> 'I am an hundred and twenty years old this day, . . . and the Lord hath said unto me: Thou shalt not go

<sup>1</sup> Briggs, *loc. cit.*, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. xxxi. 2.

over this Jordan, the Lord thy God he will go over before thee.' And not only that, but it is said that when Moses had made an end of writing the words of the law in a book until they were finished,<sup>1</sup> he commanded the Levites: 'Take this book of the law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant.' These words may have been written by the same man who wrote the chapter speaking of the death of Moses, but anyhow they say that not only did Moses speak these words, this law as it is said in the first chapter, but that he also put this law in writing himself. Now, I ask, what clearer attestation could one imagine of Moses being its author?

I am therefore quite at loss to understand these words of Dr. Driver: <sup>2</sup> 'Though it may appear paradoxical to say so, Deuteronomy does not claim to be written by Moses. The writer who introduces Moses in the third person is the real author of the book, it is pseudonymous and falls into the same category as the speeches in the historical books, which are characteristic of ancient historians generally.'

Do not let us play with words. The dictionary defines a forgery in this way:<sup>3</sup> the making of a thing in imitation of another thing, *with a view to deceiving*, as the forgery of a bond. The French dictionary, as explanation of the word 'faux' quotes this sentence of Voltaire: 'Ceux qui font courir leurs ouvrages sous le nom d'autrui sont réellement coupables du crime de faux.' In the English definition, of which I quote only half, the important words, indicating what is characteristic of the forgery, that which distinguishes it from another imitation, are these: 'with a view to deceive'.

What the author of Deuteronomy does, is to use the name of Moses in order to give to his laws an authority which they would not otherwise have. The people would not submit to these laws unless they thought that Moses had proclaimed them, unless they had been deceived as to the name of the real author. I do not see how that cannot be called a forgery: writing a book under a false name.

I am ready to credit the author of Deuteronomy with the most laudable intentions. He certainly did it to ensure the success of these laws, which were to put an end to the idolatry which prevailed under Manasseh. He wished to restore the worship of the Lord in the nation, and in the temple which had been dishonoured by the graven image of Asherah. But his efforts were none the less based on deceit, and it cannot be admitted that the end justifies the means.

Dr. Driver takes great pains to clear the author from any dis-

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxi. 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 3rd ed., p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> Webster's Dictionary, *sub voce* 'forgery'.

honest motive. 'He was doing nothing inconsistent with the literary usages of his age and people.' Dr. Driver goes so far as to call Deuteronomy 'a prophetic reformulation, and adaptation to new needs of an older legislation'.<sup>1</sup> But if this legislation is reproduced correctly, if the author gives us a faithful account of laws which existed before, if you trust him in this respect, why do you not believe him when he affirms that Moses is the author of these laws? Why do you reject this statement when you adopt all the others? He does not say so only once, it is not a mention which may have slipped unintentionally into the text. Over and over again, more than a dozen times, he says that the words are those of Moses, so that there is a deliberate intention to impress his readers with the fact that these laws were given by Moses. It seems to me that you are confronted with this dilemma: either Deuteronomy is Mosaic, or it is a forgery. I see no other alternative.

If the name of Moses has been ascribed to Deuteronomy merely to give the book an authority, it is difficult to see how this result could be attained. The Moses who is an authority, who appeals to the people, is the lawgiver who is known by the traditional view of the Pentateuch, he is the man whom the Lord knew face to face, who had brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and who, near Mount Sinai and later on in the plain of Moab, near the Jordan, had given them a code of laws in which some changes might occur owing to change of circumstances, but which were nevertheless the commandments which Jahveh had dictated to him.

This is not the Moses of the critics. Who was Moses for the people at Jerusalem at the time of Josiah? How could they know him? He had never written a word. His legislative work did not exist, since the oldest of the laws under his name are of the time of Josiah, and the bulk of the others is post-exilian, of the year 444? Even the highest moral law, the Decalogue, has been put down by an Ephraimitic writer of the eighth century, perhaps not a century before Deuteronomy; was it known at Jerusalem? As for his biography, what his life had been, there was no record of it before a narrative of the Judaic writer of the ninth century. If we take the critical view, what is left of the Moses, the commanding lawgiver whose voice re-echoed the words the Lord spake to him face to face, and whose name was enough to give a law an authority which nobody would have dared to dispute? Does not the Moses of tradition alone appeal even to us as the man of God, of whom we can say that 'there hath not risen a prophet since in Israel like unto him'?

<sup>1</sup> Driver, *loc. cit.*, p. 85.

Have we not here a confirmation of what I said at the beginning? The work of Higher Criticism is pre-eminently destructive. The Moses of tradition exists no more. Compare with him the man who has been put in his place, and whose appearance is very different according to the person who portrays him. The same may be said of the Pentateuch, it has fallen to pieces, when we contrast this majestic temple with the numerous constructions which have been raised with its fragments. Higher Critics agree only on the destruction of tradition; as for the reconstructive work, the ideas and systems are most divergent, the most extreme and extraordinary views are constantly being put forward, and, like the name of Moses for the laws of Deuteronomy, the name of Higher Criticism alone gives these new systems an authority which they would not otherwise have.

At the outset, in our study of the Old Testament literature, we were faced by Higher Criticism, and we endeavoured to measure it by its own measure, and test its strength by its own methods and principles. Before closing, I should like to revert again to the first chapters of Genesis, and to put side by side the theory of Higher Criticism and pure tradition.

The origin of Higher Criticism, you remember, is the remark of Astruc and after him of Eichhorn<sup>1</sup> that for the name of God some of the chapters used Elohim and some Jahveh, implying the hand of two different authors. Eichhorn worked out his principle with consistency and traced the two documents through the whole of Genesis and the two first chapters of Exodus; from there to the end the Mosaic books were the work of a single man. In Genesis, he noticed a few exceptions which he called insertions or additions of other documents, the most important of which is chap. ii. 4 to iii. 24, the creation of Adam and Eve and the fall, where God is called Jahveh Elohim. As to chap. i, for Eichhorn there can be no doubt that it is the work of the Elohist, since everywhere God is called Elohim.

His followers, though pretending to attach great value to the differences in the names of God for the distinction of various authors, have been unfaithful to the conclusions of the Father of Higher Criticism. Chap. i, the creation of heaven and earth, is not Elohist, it is part of the Priestly Code, the post-exilic book of the year 444. Chap. ii. 4 to iii. 24 is undoubtedly the work of the Jahvist, but here there is a flaw either in the document or in the theory: where we should find Jahveh alone, we find Jahveh Elohim. That does not mean that there is a fault in the theory, Elohim has been inserted

<sup>1</sup> Eichhorn, *loc. cit.*, ii, pp. 300, 348.

there by the redactor, the man who compiled Genesis out of the fragments he had collected.

This is the kind of evidence which is often offered us by Higher Criticism. I must say that I do not know of any more contemptible argument in historical research: a document does not agree with a system or theory, therefore the document must be corrupt or interpolated! And in this case the interpolation does not occur once, but about twenty times. Curiously, when God is mentioned under one name alone, as in the words of the serpent, he is called Elohim, and Jahveh alone is not once found in this Jahvistic document. Therefore, to preserve to it its Jahvistic character, it was necessary to suppose the corrective insertion of the redactor. This is the interpretation of Higher Criticism for the first three chapters of Genesis: the creation of heaven and earth is a post-exilian composition of the year 444; the creation of Adam and Eve and the history of the fall were written by a Judaic author in the ninth century, with corrections made by the redactor.

Let us now turn to tradition, without any conjectural addition or correction of any kind. These three chapters are part of Genesis, the first book of the Law. They are written by Moses, like the whole of the Pentateuch. In the beginning, Elohim created the heaven and the earth. Elohim, God, is not only the creator, he is the omnipotent father. 'Who are these?' says old Jacob to his son Joseph, who has come to see him, and Joseph says unto his father: 'They are my sons, whom Elohim hath given me here.' Of Sarah it is said 'that she bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the same time which Elohim had spoken to him'.<sup>1</sup>

But Moses knows very well that in His dealings with men, when He speaks or commands, God is called Jahveh, for instance, 'Jahveh visited Sarah as He had said'<sup>2</sup> and therefore, when Moses describes the creation of man, the action of God towards Adam and Eve and the language of God to them, he will call God Jahveh, because he, Moses, has been expressly taught by God himself the meaning of that name, but this Jahveh is not different from Elohim the creator of the heaven and the earth, there is only one God, and therefore, in order to state it decisively, when he describes the creation of man, he calls God by His two names, Jahveh Elohim. This double name is necessary, without it the narrative of the creation of man would not be complete.

You see that these two words contain a magnificent truth which is the corner-stone, not only of Genesis, but of the Old Testament, and

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xxi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis xxi. 1.

which the system of Higher Criticism either ignores or destroys. From the moment when man stood up in this vast creation which had been prepared for him, and over which he was to have dominion, when he first awoke in this garden where had grown every tree that is pleasant to the eye and good for food, from the first instant of his existence, he had one God, Jahveh Elohim, and Jahveh Elohim the Lord God alone.

And in the man whose hand wrote at that place these two momentous words, do you not recognize the lawgiver who will later come down from Sinai, holding in his hands a stone table on which were inscribed these words of God: 'I am Jahveh thy God, thou shalt have none other gods before me'; or who, later on, when he was going to part from the people he had been guiding in the desert during forty years, cries in their ears: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.'<sup>1</sup>

I hope I have presented here tradition in all its simplicity, reading merely what is written, without any addition or conjecture of my own.

Here I must bring to a close what we have to say about the results achieved by Higher Criticism. Our next lecture will turn on what the Higher Critics have not done, on a question which they never asked, viz. What is the original form of the text of the Old Testament? Is the text of the Hebrew Bible, such as we have it, an original, or has it passed through one or more transformations? At present the critics admit that the script, the square Hebrew, is of recent date, about the Christian era, transcribed from an older alphabet, but as for the language, they do not go beyond the Massoretic version. Is the language of the Hebrew Bible that in which the anonymous writers like the Elohist or the Jahvist or the Priestly Code, or among the known authors Amos and Isaiah, wrote their books? This very grave question we propose to inquire into, and for this we cannot do better than use the methods and borrow the principles of Higher Criticism. We shall again consult Dr. Briggs:<sup>2</sup> 'The older interpreters, who did not understand the position of the Hebrew language in the development of the Shemitic family, . . . lived almost in another world. The modern Hebrew scholars are working in far more extended relations, and upon vastly deeper principles.' This we intend to do: we shall study the position of Hebrew among the other Semitic languages: we shall extend our field of research beyond the Massoretic version of the Bible, and in this our hopes and our expectations are those of the eminent American divine: 'We should not be surprised at new and almost revolutionary results.'

<sup>1</sup> Deut. vi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Briggs, *loc. cit.*, p. 475.



## LECTURE II

### BABYLONIAN CUNEIFORM AND THE CANAANITE SCRIPT

THE first author whom we find in the Old Testament is Moses. Tradition attributes to him the whole of Pentateuch, and this tradition is not merely a recollection transmitted orally from father to son through many generations, it is a written statement found in several of his books; we may call it his signature. This signature does not exist in Genesis, the only book among the five which deals with events earlier than Moses, and of which he had not been a witness. Genesis alone may be considered as anonymous, though it is hardly possible to suppose that any one but Moses could have written it.

In Exodus, Moses speaks of himself in the third person, but he generally repeats what God had said to him, and the laws he had proclaimed to the Israelites at God's command. In this respect it differs very little from Numbers. Leviticus ends with these words: 'These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai.' This is the statement which the critics repudiate in the most emphatic way, since they attribute the whole of the book to the Priestly Code, a document of the year 444. The book of Numbers also ends with these words: 'These are the commandments and the judgments which the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses unto the children of Israel in the plain of Moab, by the Jordan at Jericho.' Thus, though these two Books of Law are divided into two parts, the law given on Sinai and that of Moab, the Mosaic origin of both parts is asserted in the same way.

As for Deuteronomy, at the beginning it is said: 'These are the words which Moses spake unto all Israel beyond Jordan in the wilderness.' Moses often speaks in the first person, the whole book has a rhetorical turn, it is the last speech of Moses in which he repeats a part of the law; as Eichhorn says, it is 'a short exposition of the whole Mosaic constitution, concerning all the parts of the state, except what belonged to the priests. It is the last review of the laws by the lawgiver himself, . . . it is the last voice of the father and the

leader of the people, . . . every page bears evidence of a book written on the verge of the grave'.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the Law, it is said that Moses had written it and handed it over to the Levites to be put by the side of the Ark of the Covenant. Then follows his song and his blessing, which it is possible that he did not put down in writing himself. The last chapter, relating his death, he certainly did not write. Nevertheless the book itself is said repeatedly to be his work and his words, but the critics are nearly unanimous in giving as its date the eighteenth year of Josiah, 621 B.C.

The generally received opinion is that the books of Moses, whatever be their date, were written in the language now called Hebrew, but not in the square Hebrew characters of the Bible. Square Hebrew, which is derived from the Aramaic alphabet, is of a very recent date, nobody denies this fact. It did not assume the appearance under which we know it long before the Christian era, and even then it was without vowels. The vowel points added to it by the Massora do not go further back than the fifth century.

It has always been admitted that, before square Hebrew, the books of Scripture were written with the Canaanite or Phoenician alphabet, to which the name 'old Hebrew' was given, a name which, as we shall see, now seems to be erroneous. As to Scripture being written with that alphabet, we look in vain for a proof of it. It is a mere hypothesis, the value of which we will now test. In order to do so, we must go back to the origin of the people of Israel.

This is what we read in Genesis (xi. 31) :

'Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan ; and they came unto Haran and dwelt there . . . and Terah died in Haran.

'(xii) Now the Lord said unto Abram: Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee, and I will make of thee a great nation, . . . and Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.'

Many centuries afterwards, when Stephen was speaking before his judges, he thus recalled God's command to Abram: 'The God of glory appeared unto our father Abram when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said unto him: Get thee out of thy

<sup>1</sup> *Einleitung ins Alte Testament*, ii, p. 365.

land, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee' (Acts vii. 3). If, therefore, we interpret these passages in the true Biblical sense, it was a religious motive, it was religion, or, as it is expressed, not by the abstract word 'religion', but in a concrete form, the only one which could be understood in that remote time, it was God's command which induced Abram to leave the country of his father. His worship was not that of his environment: he may perhaps have been persecuted or ill-treated in some way.

A book, the original of which is lost and which is generally assigned to the close of the Maccabaeian age, to the latter half of the second century B. C., the book of Judith, speaks of the ancestors of the Jews as worshippers of the God of Heaven and as having been driven out by the Chaldeans to Mesopotamia, where they received the command of God to go to Canaan. In this passage the character of the Abrahamites as being a persecuted religious sect is well marked.

Josephus quotes several authors who, he says, have written about Abraham<sup>1</sup>: Berosus and Hecataeus, to whom Abraham was a man of considerable wisdom and remarkable intelligence, who tried to reform the religious belief and worship of the Chaldeans, so much so that they revolted against him and drove him out of the country. Nicolas the Damascene speaks of Abraham as a king of Damascus who conquered Chaldaea and settled afterwards at Canaan. These are vagaries devoid of historical value, but it is interesting to contrast such accretions of later time with the text, with those pregnant words of Genesis which tell us merely what is strictly necessary. Abram goes to Canaan obeying God's command; that was enough to show the religious character which dominated his life and foreordained him to his religious mission.

It is most important that we should replace him in his environment, in his time and in his country. In this respect we have now some very valuable information derived from the researches of several Assyriologists, among whom I shall name two of the most eminent: Mr. King in England and M. Thureau-Dangin in France.

As far back as we can go in the history of Mesopotamia, we find the country divided between two races: in the north Semites, the Akkadians, further south the Sumerians, who extended as far as the Persian Gulf. Akkad or Agade was an important city, the site of which has not been identified.<sup>2</sup> It was probably in the neighbourhood of Sippar, the city of the famous temple of the sun-god. The

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq. Jud.* I, chap. vii.

<sup>2</sup> King, *History of Sumer and Akkad*, p. 37.

Akkadian was the Semitic speech of the whole of Babylonia, the country of Akkad.<sup>1</sup>

The Sumerians, a non-Semitic race, occupied the lower plains of the Tigris and Euphrates: they were much more civilized than the Akkadians. 'That Babylonian civilization and culture originated with the Sumerians is no longer in dispute.'<sup>2</sup> Perhaps their most important achievement was the invention of cuneiform writing, for this in time was adopted as a common script throughout the East; especially it became the script of the Babylonians and Assyrians, that with which they wrote their own language.<sup>3</sup>

Of the two, the most warlike were certainly the Akkadians, who already in the first half of the third millenium had powerful kings. Sargon of Agade conquered the whole of Babylonia and went as far as the Persian Gulf.<sup>4</sup> In his time, in consequence of commercial relations, a considerable immigration took place from Akkad and the north towards the Sumerian cities of the south. Sargon conquered the land of the *Amurru*, the Western land, which means Syria and Palestine. The *Amurru*, according to Mr. King, the Western Semites, were Semitic emigrants who had come from the north-west.<sup>5</sup>

Sargon's conquests in Babylonia did not last. About two hundred years afterwards, in the city of Ur, the most southern in the land of Sumer, which at that time was on the coast of the Persian Gulf, there arose a powerful dynasty, the mightiest of whose princes was Dungi. The dynasty of Ur represents a very definite Sumerian reaction against the Semites;<sup>6</sup> the king sacked Babylon, but the Elamite conquerors put an end to the dynasty of Ur. Their successors were the kings of Isin, a city the site of which has not been identified. These kings claimed the title of kings of Sumer and Akkad. The 225 years during which their dynasty lasted seem to have been a period of trouble and confusion, the country was invaded by the *Amurru*, the Western Semites, who succeeded in establishing a dynasty of their own in Babylon. The seat of power now passed to the north, to the city of Babylon. After the first wave of immigration which resulted in the establishment of her first dynasty, the racial character of Babylonia became dominantly Semitic.<sup>7</sup>

In the list of conquered countries is *Amurru* or the Western land. Mr. King thinks that it is possible that the first Semitic influence

<sup>1</sup> King, *loc. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 238 and ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, *loc. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>6</sup> Hall, *The Ancient History of the Near East*, p. 190.

<sup>7</sup> King, *loc. cit.*, p. 320.

reached the Euphrates through Syria, and it was to Syria that the stream of Semitic influence, impregnated with Semitic culture, now returned. Evidently, in Syria and Palestine the predominant influence, even under the old kings of Akkad, and still more under the first Babylonian dynasty, was already Semitic. These princes were even considered as being Amurru themselves, South Syrian Arabs, or Palestinians; the first of them may have been parallel to the last kings of the dynasty of Isin. In his seventeenth year, however, King Sin-Muballit conquered Isin,<sup>1</sup> which had been occupied by the king of Larsa, and put an end to the dynasty. His son and successor was the famous Hammurabi or Ammurapi, as his name is now read, whom the Assyriologists generally admit to have been the Amraphel of the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. Abraham would thus be contemporary with Hammurabi, whose reign must have begun about 1940. This gives us an approximate date for Abraham.

The city from which Terah departed was Ur, or, as it is called, Ur of the Chaldees. It was an important city from which, as we have seen, a mighty dynasty arose: it also had a celebrated temple of the moon-god. We do not know the motives which induced Terah to leave Ur: it is not said distinctly, as for Abraham, that he received a religious command. Terah belonged probably to one of these families of Semitic immigrants who had settled in Sumer at the time of Sargon of Agade. Perhaps he was not a worshipper of the moon-god, or he may have left Ur because of the great troubles through which the city passed at the end of the dynasty of Isin, when it was conquered and probably destroyed by the Elamites.

We do not know where the city of Haran was situated; it seems probable that it was in the north, where the way to Canaan was not so long and difficult as in the south. There Haran dwelt with his son Abram and his nephew Lot, and there he remained to the end of his life, for he may have been still living when Abram received the command 'Get thee out of thy father's house'. He departed for the country of the Amurru, where he would find a population, a considerable part of which was of the same race as himself, and which had been for centuries completely under Babylonian influence. Sargon I had already introduced the Babylonian language and cuneiform writing, so that, as Professor Lehmann-Haupt says, 'from the latest date of 2600 until about 1950, Phoenicia and Palestine were under the continuous dominion of the East, where Babylonian culture was the ruling element in all respects'.<sup>2</sup> Babylonian culture did not disappear in

<sup>1</sup> King, *loc. cit.* p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, *Israel*, pp. 13, 15.

Palestine with the dominion of Babylon, it lasted through the time when Palestine was under Egyptian rule; the language remained the same, and it became in many respects the culture of the Israelites when they were the occupants and the rulers of the country.

The date of Abraham is given in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, which relates the campaign of four Mesopotamian kings against five Palestinian princes. The views of the critics are most divergent both as to the date and the historical value of this chapter. Extreme critics like Noeldeke consider it as having a purely fictitious character, and being of a very late origin. Gunkel thinks it belongs to an age in which, in spite of a certain historical erudition, the historical sense of Judaism had sunk almost to zero. To Professor Skinner chap. xiv is 'an isolated boulder in the stratification of the Pentateuch . . . but not in itself an evidence of high antiquity'.<sup>1</sup> According to the learned Cambridge professor, 'some of the names like Arioch having been identified from a cuneiform tablet of the fourth or third century B.C., there is here a positive proof that the period with which the story deals was a theme of poetic and legendary treatment in the age to which criticism is disposed approximately to assign the composition of Genesis xiv.'<sup>2</sup> This would be even later than the Priestly Code, with which certain critics like Gautier find in this chapter some analogy.<sup>3</sup> The late Dr. Driver considered it as one of the oldest parts of Genesis. An American Assyriologist, Dr. Haupt, has recently put forward quite a new idea which I shall quote in his own words.<sup>4</sup> 'The purpose of this chapter is an encouragement to rebel against foreign yoke. Just as Abraham with his 318 followers could rescue the booty from the mighty king of the Elamites, so Zerubbabel and his followers could set the great king of Persia at defiance. This chapter must have been written in the beginning of the year 519.'

In his book on Israel, Dr. Lehmann-Haupt, the eminent German Assyriologist, says that this chapter contains not only valuable historical information, but gives us a correct picture of an important epoch of old oriental history, a description which not only can bear out the control of cuneiform inscriptions, but even adds materially to them.<sup>5</sup> Chedorlaomer is a thoroughly Elamitic name, and at that time the power of Elam extended over Western Asia and over his neighbours who are mentioned here, viz. the king of Ellasar (Larsa) called Arioch, the servant of the moon, another pronunciation of Rimsin, Amraphel,

<sup>1</sup> Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> Skinner, *Genesis*, p. 275.

<sup>3</sup> *Introduction à l'Ancien Testament*, i, p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 1915, p. 71.

<sup>5</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, *loc. cit.*, p. 8.

a transcription of Hammurapi, king of Shinear, a well-known name of Babylon, and Tideal, who is a sovereign, not of Goïim, the nations, but of Gutium, another small kingdom north-east of Babylonia. Thus these names, in Dr. Lehmann-Haupt's opinion, are absolutely historical. As to their connexion with Abram, the greatest part of this episode is legend, and nothing but legend. On this point we cannot agree with Dr. Lehmann-Haupt. The important point, however, is that chap. xiv gives us the date of Abram, whether he is considered as a legendary figure placed in that epoch, or whether he is a historical person.

As to when the chapter was written, this lecture will show that there is no reason to assign it to another author than the writer of the whole biography of Abraham, especially having regard to its intimate connexion with the following chapter, on which I have dwelt elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

Abram leaves Babylonia, a country of advanced literary culture, where a Semitic language was spoken and a cuneiform script employed. Mesopotamia is the country of cuneiform tablets, tablets made of wet clay on which the characters were impressed with a stilus. Thousands of these tablets have come down to us in Sumerian and in the Semitic Akkadian, which, with the dominion of Babylon, entirely superseded the Sumerian. The Semitic Babylonian extended over the whole of Western Asia. Already, the old Babylonian ruler Sargon of Agade, when he conquered the West, as he says, caused it to speak one language,<sup>2</sup> and at that remote time the Babylonian language spread over Phoenicia and Palestine.

I cannot describe here the enormous cuneiform literature which has been preserved. Libraries, archives, have been discovered, in which all kinds of documents had been collected, not only political and legal, but many dealing even with grammar, language, and natural science. Among these collections, all that relates to religion, mythology, and magic forms an important part. A considerable number of religious tablets have been preserved. Tablets of baked clay, like the potsherds, are a very lasting material, and very good for valuable documents which have to be protected against destruction. Besides, a clay tablet was something very handy, very convenient for letters which had to be transported a long way: it was not very liable to injury when carried about on a journey.

Thus it is absolutely certain that Abram, departing from Haran in

<sup>1</sup> *The Unity of Genesis*. Transactions of the Victoria Institute, vol. xlvii, p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, *loc. cit.*, p. 13.

the beginning of Hammurabi's reign or at the end of his father's, left a country already highly civilized, with a Semitic book-language, Babylonian, which was the dominant language of Western Asia, and which was written in cuneiform on clay tablets.

Without going to the length of Josephus, who states that Abraham tried to bring about a reform among his countrymen, and on the strength of the passage of Genesis confirmed by the book of Judith, we can well say that it was his religion, his belief different from that of his surroundings, which obliged him to leave the country. Now, considering the character of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia and their customs, it is certainly no far-fetched hypothesis to suppose that a group of men, who had their special creed, might have also their religious books which referred to that creed, and which could only be clay tablets, written in cuneiform like all the other religious books of the country.

A sect migrating to a foreign land in order to be able to practise its own worship in peace, generally takes its own books, which are its most valuable treasures, and from which it would not part. This has happened at all times, and does even in ours. I need not quote quite recent examples from America.

Abram took his tablets when he left for Canaan, and of these tablets we may well admit that they contained what we have in Genesis, from the creation of the world down to Abram's father, Terah. This conjecture seems to me supported by two facts. Some of them, like the narrative of the flood, have a decidedly Babylonian character, and they also contain the genealogy of Abraham. We know what great value Orientals attach to genealogies, which are the beginning of history. History originated from genealogies and biographies. There may have been more tablets, the writer of Genesis may have made a choice between them and rejected those which had no place in the very definite plan of his first book.

The primaeval history of mankind down to Abraham was transmitted to the Israelites through Abraham himself, who brought it when he came to settle in Canaan, in the form of cuneiform tablets. This assertion, of which I do not deny the conjectural character, is quite in keeping with what we know for certain of the time, of the land, of its inhabitants and their language; it does not clash with the information which recent discoveries have brought us, and I maintain, in spite of the sneers of the critics, that this conjecture rests on a more solid base than their Jahvists, Elohist, redactor, Priestly Code, and all the authors whom their imagination has called into existence.

I will even go a step further; it is possible that a man like Abraham,



a powerful sheikh as we should call him to-day, had in his retinue a man who could write, whose duty was to keep records of his master's dealings with his neighbours, who had to superintend all concerning his master's great wealth, like Eliezer his servant, the elder of his house 'that ruled over all he had'. A man who had so completely his master's confidence that Abraham thought of making him his heir, might put down in writing on clay tablets the principal events of his master's life, which would be handed down to his descendants, such as for instance, Abram's journey to Egypt, his victory over the Mesopotamian kings when he delivered Lot. This man might have been entrusted with all that referred to the biography of his master. This is perhaps the way in which the record of Abraham's life was preserved and transmitted to his family, so that finally it reached Moses in Egypt.

Abraham left a country where a Semitic language was spoken and he came to another where the people were mostly Semites and spoke a language of the same family. Let us quote our authority in the last lecture, Dr. Briggs: 'Whether Abraham adopted the language of the Canaanites or brought the Hebrew with him from the East is unimportant, for the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian are nearer the Hebrew and Phoenician than they are to the other Semitic languages. If these languages, as now they are presented to us, differ less than the Roman languages, the daughters of Latin, in their earlier stages, in the time of Abraham their differences could scarcely have been more than dialectic.'<sup>1</sup>

This statement has a theoretical, I may even say scholastic colour; it reflects the principle of the old philology, which considered each nation as having its own language and script, within its own political limits. No difference was made between what is spoken and what is written. But now we have another idea about language; anthropology, which is more and more studied, compels us to look closer at what may be seen among living men, at the present day. And we find that, in civilized nations, we have to make a difference between the literary and the spoken language. The literary, the written language, is in the first place the language of religion and law, and of all books; it follows more or less the rules called grammar, in which there is a certain conventional element. This language covers a number of dialects which are the language of the people, generally unwritten, and used in ordinary life.

It is still the case at the present day, when one might suppose that schools, compulsory education, and military service should have

<sup>1</sup> Briggs, *Gen. Introd.*, p. 52.

levelled down such linguistic inequalities. Take for instance the German language, which is spoken over a very large area, inhabited by nations of a different origin, and under different political rulers. German prose, literary German, has existed only since Luther translated the Bible into a Saxon dialect. From that time, this prose has become classical; it was used by the great writers at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the creators of German literature. It is taught in schools, used in the pulpit, in political councils, and in all writings, from the newspapers to the most scientific and learned compositions. It has completely established its dominion in German-speaking nations.

Nevertheless it has not destroyed the local dialects, the language of the people, the unwritten idiom which in certain countries is as vivid as ever. Dialects are very much more studied now than they used to be. Previously they were rather despised; the French name of 'patois' implies a language which is more or less contemptible because it is not that of the well educated. Now they are treated with more respect. They are to philology what the prehistoric remains of antiquity are to archaeology, because they are earlier than the written language.

As to German dialects, one of the most interesting countries to study is Switzerland. If you travel in German-speaking Switzerland, you will find that each canton or sometimes part of a canton has its own dialect, in which the words, their form and their pronunciation, differ from the written German so much that an educated person coming from the north of Germany does not always understand them. The dialect is not the same at Berne as at Basle or Zurich, but the people coming from these cantons understand each other. Everybody speaks the dialect, even in our time, whether he be a peasant or, as the old Bernese say, a 'Ratsherr', a member of the council. At the same time everybody knows more or less the literary German. German only is taught at school and supposed to be the sole language employed in political councils, even letters are written in German because there is no regular orthography for the Swiss dialects. And yet German has not driven out the native dialects, which are as living as ever. A clergyman from Zurich said to me lately: 'German is still looked upon by our people as the Sunday coat.'

These dialects are unwritten, they have no real literature, they have songs, even poetry, which the friends of folklore gather with precious care. Lately novelists have written a few novels in these dialects, like those composed in Plattdeutsch in Germany, but the original character of the 'patois' consists in its being unwritten. Supposing

therefore that because the Bible used at Berne is in German, we were to conclude that the language of the Bible is the idiom spoken by the people, we should make a very great mistake, which has often been made when dealing with the languages of antiquity.

Now let us revert to Abraham's time. Babylonian with its cuneiform script was the literary language of the whole of Western Asia. At Babylon, in Mesopotamia, the people must have spoken a Semitic dialect closely related to the written language. It is quite possible that there was more than one dialect in this region with its many large and important cities, generally independent, and several of which played the part of the ruling power. Certainly the popular language was not the same throughout the whole region where Babylonian cuneiform was the written language, from Tyre to Susa, in the mountains of Syria and along the great rivers.

Take even a part of that region, Palestine, which became the kingdom of the Israelites, a mountainous country with cities which before the conquest were never united under a central power. These cities would occasionally form a coalition in order to fight an Egyptian conqueror, but afterwards, when the danger was over, this temporary confederacy would dissolve at once. One can fancy that the linguistic conditions were similar to those of the primitive peoples of the present day. Travellers and missionaries tell us that in Africa, among the Bantu for instance, each tribe has its own dialect. They understand each other because these tribal languages belong to the same family, but their idiom is not the same.

We can well imagine that such may have been the case with Abraham. Coming from Haran, speaking the Semitic dialect of the place, he would understand the people where he settled and converse with them in their own idiom, just as in Switzerland men from Basle and Zurich easily converse together, but in the next generation this difference would disappear.

Judging the question from the anthropological point of view, we should say that Canaan in Abraham's time was a country where several Semitic idioms were spoken. The difference between them and those of Mesopotamia could, to employ again Dr. Briggs's words, 'scarcely have been more than dialectic.' We have no indication whatever as to the language of the inhabitants of Canaan, but, considering that it was a country with a great number of cities more or less independent, it seems probable that, as would be the case at the present day, there were several dialects. Which of these early idioms became Hebrew we do not know.

The name *Hebrew* as that of the language spoken by the Israelites

at any time is never met with in the Old Testament, and Dr. Briggs's contention that the Biblical Hebrew was brought by Abraham from Mesopotamia or found by him in Canaan seems absolutely groundless, and still more the assertion that the Hebrew language 'had already a considerable development prior to the entrance of Abraham into the Holy Land'. This seems pure imagination. All we can say is that the inhabitants of both the countries in which Abraham lived spoke a Semitic dialect.

The idea which is still predominant in a great many books, that Hebrew was the language of Canaan, and that whoever went into Canaan found there people speaking and writing it with its own script—this idea is the contrary of what we learn from anthropology; besides, it would be absolutely impossible to say what were the boundaries of that language, where it began and where it ended, and how its limits were marked.

Canaan, whatever the number of its dialects, had a literary language, which had been imported into the country when it was occupied by the Mesopotamian Semites, and which was the same as in Mesopotamia, viz. : Babylonian cuneiform, and that we know neither by tradition nor by any literary or historical statement, but because we have the documents themselves, which we owe to a wonderful discovery made in Egypt.

In the year 1888, fellaheen working at a place now called Tel el Amarna, which was known to have been the capital of a king who tried to make a religious revolution in Egypt, came upon a box or a jar of the same kind as those found in Mesopotamia, containing about 300 clay tablets written in cuneiform characters. These tablets are now divided between the museums of Berlin, Cairo, and London. They proved to be part of the archives of the kings Amenophis III and IV and their correspondence with the kings of Asia, and also with the governors of the cities of Palestine under Egyptian dominion.

The kings from whom the Egyptian sovereign receives letters are kings of Babylon, Assyria, Mitanni, a country situated in the corner of the Euphrates, and Alasia, which may be Cyprus or a part of the coast. The other letters are from Canaanite princes or governors of cities. Some seem to be mere vassals like Aziru of the land of Amurru, the Amorites who occupied a great part of the land, others are certainly governors who had been appointed by Thothmes III, the great conqueror. The letters show that Egyptian dominion is already unsteady, the governors in their reports to the king often speak of strangers who threaten them. They often also complain of their

neighbours who, like themselves subjects of the king, invade and pillage their territory. They ask for help. Several of these governors write from places which are not yet identified and may have been as far away as North Syria. But some of them are Ribaddi of Gebal (Byblos), Ammunira of Beirut, Zimrida of Zidon, Abi-milki of Tyre, Surata of Akko, Japahi of Gezer, Jitia of Ashkelon, another Zimrida of Lachish, and we have several important letters from Abd-hiba of Jerusalem.

These letters are all written in Babylonian cuneiform, and since there are here and there Phoenician or Hebrew glosses, some critics have pretended that it was not the language of the country. On the contrary, it is exactly what one might expect. An administrative report written in a legal and sometimes conventional style will always bear traces of the native idiom. If written in French it will not be exactly the same, whether its author is in Paris, Brussels, Geneva, or Bordeaux. These Phoenician and Hebrew glosses are the best proof that these tablets were written in the country itself, they are in the literary language of the authors, the glosses are in the popular language. A letter like these is written either in the language of the subject or that of the master. It certainly was not the language of the Egyptian sovereign; he did not understand Babylonian, since the king of Mitanni sends him a 'targumanu', a dragoman; it can only be that of the princes or officers whose letters were addressed to the king of Egypt.

Babylonian has sometimes been called the diplomatic language, the French of Western Asia. This idea seems to me perfectly absurd. A diplomatic language is used by reason of an agreement between civilized nations, it is an object of study, and the appertainment of a few. What reason could the governor of a city in Palestine, appointed by the king of Egypt, have for writing to him in any other language than his own, or that of his king? We are certain that it is not that of the king, it can then only be that of the subject.

An important point to notice is that at that time there was no Phoenician language and script; Tyre and Zidon were not the powerful cities having the command of the sea, as they afterwards became; they were still what we should call provincial cities of Palestine, under the rule of Pharaoh. If there had been a Phoenician script, Zimrida and Abimilki would certainly have used it.

The tablets of Tel el Amarna belong to the eighteenth dynasty, to the time when the Israelites were in Egypt. But another find, still more important, has been made at Boghaz Keui in Asia Minor, the capital of the Hittites. Among the great number of tablets, all in

cuneiform characters, is the treaty of Rameses II with the king of the Hittites, Hattusil, and a series of letters and edicts concerning the Amurru, the Amorites. Most of the documents from Boghaz Keui are later than the Tel el Amarna find. They are of the time of Moses, since Rameses II was the first persecutor of the Israelites.

Cuneiform tablets have also been found in Palestine, generally legal documents which had to be preserved. Two such contracts have been discovered at Gezer; they date from the middle of the seventh century. These contracts have a local origin, they are written in a language which must have been the local language of the city. At Taanach eight tablets or fragments have been found, and I must repeat here a quotation, which I have made already elsewhere, from the excavator, Dr. Sellin. After having said that, from 1500 to 1350, Babylonian writing was the only one used at the courts of the princes of Palestine, the learned author adds: 'Even supposing that this writing was used only by the rulers and their officials, and that the people could not read and write, this fact is certain: in the already extensive excavations which have been carried on in Palestine no document has ever been found in any except in Babylonian writing. As for the Phoenician or old Hebrew writing, it cannot be asserted with certainty that it existed before the ninth century.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Abraham left a country where the written language and script was Babylonian cuneiform. If he took with him his religious books or his genealogy, they were clay tablets written in cuneiform, and he came to a country where princes and officials, governors of cities, all that we should call the educated and ruling class, used no other script and language. We have no reason to suppose that his family did not preserve them; one does not see why he should have made a change and where this change should have originated. It is possible that the dialect he spoke when coming from Mesopotamia differed somewhat from that of his neighbours at Mamre, but as is the case now among emigrants, in the next generation this difference would have been effaced. Anyhow, the written language was the same.

In Egypt, the Hebrews who were settled in a separate part of the country preserved their native language, the Semitic dialect they brought from Canaan, like the Jewish colonists who later on settled at Elephantine and in other cities of Egypt. We have no information at all about their life in Egypt, except that they must have prospered and increased considerably. One may even imagine that they became so attached to Egypt and the Egyptian soil, that persecu-

<sup>1</sup> *Tell Tuank*, Nachlese, p. 35.

tion was necessary to remind them that their own country, the country which was given to them as an inheritance, and in which they were to fulfil their mission, was Canaan.

And now we come to the great lawgiver and writer, Moses. I need not recall the circumstances of his birth and education. The important points are these: he was a Semite, he was one of the Israelites settled in Egypt, he had intercourse with them; at the same time he had been brought up like the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and he was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, so that he was conversant, not only with the ideas and traditions of his countrymen, but also with the learning of the Egyptians and the customs which prevailed at the court of Pharaoh, to which he had access.

Moses could write, there seems to be no doubt about it, the Pentateuch states it repeatedly. Could he write Egyptian hieroglyphs? That we do not know, indeed it is of no importance in relation as to his mission as leader of his countrymen. He was the intermediary agent between the king and his countrymen. We cannot admit as historical all that Josephus says of him, of his high position in the kingdom which excited the jealousy of the Egyptians. History does not know anything of an expedition of the Ethiopians against the Egyptians which endangered the kingdom, the invaders going as far as Memphis, where Moses was put at the head of an Egyptian army and crushed the Ethiopians, penetrating into their country, making peace with them and receiving as his wife the princess Tharbis. This is mere myth, as is very often the case when Josephus enlarges on Scripture.

Do not let us go outside of the text of the Pentateuch. This teaches us distinctly that Moses knew the written language of his countrymen. This language, for Abraham and his descendants, as we know from the Babylonian inscriptions of Mesopotamia and the tablets of Tel el Amarna, could only be Babylonian cuneiform, the *one language* which Sargon of Agade had introduced into Western Asia many centuries before, the literary and religious language written in cuneiform on clay tablets.

Even supposing that the Israelites who settled in Egypt were not very literary, that they did not care much about writing, that their written language was not often made use of, that they had even forgotten it completely, which is not likely, Moses could have learnt it at the court of Pharaoh. We have seen that the king had an active correspondence with the sovereigns of Mesopotamia and with the governors of the Palestinian cities; in that respect Boghaz Keui is still richer than Tel el Amarna. For that purpose he was obliged to

have interpreters who could translate the letters coming from abroad, but since he occasionally answered in Babylonian, it was necessary for him to have men who could write Babylonian cuneiform on tablets, men like the dragomans of the embassies. So that Moses, if he had not learnt it among his countrymen, had plenty of opportunities of doing so at the court where he was educated; and besides, if he was to be the intermediate agent between the king and his countrymen, or even if from his youth he had some idea of what his mission would be, he would understand the importance of being a man who could write, of being what the old Egyptians called a writer, a man of education.

Moses wrote Babylonian cuneiform, for at that time, in Western Asia, there was no other literary language. He would not have written in Egyptian, the language of the oppressors; besides, Babylonian cuneiform was the language of his fathers, of his ancestors in Mesopotamia. That country had been their first home. 'An Aramean ready to perish was my father', says the author of Deuteronomy (xxvi. 5). Even Josephus says that the Hebrews were Mesopotamians.

Babylonian cuneiform was the language of laws. Moses could not ignore completely the code of Hammurabi, that magnificent collection of laws from which he seems to have borrowed some of his own. These laws were said to have been dictated to the king by the god Shamash, and there was not the same objection to the language of these laws that there was to the language and writing of the Egyptians. If Abraham had religious books they were in that language and writing, and we can understand Moses following the tradition of his people.

Moses wrote his books in Babylonian cuneiform. Cuneiform is not properly a writing, it does not consist in the drawing of a sign, it is an impression made with a stylus, and the number and directions of these impressions constitute the sign. Cuneiform can be imitated on stone, it can be engraved, but the stylus cannot act on anything except wet clay or some material of the same kind. It cannot be impressed on papyrus or skin, it cannot be written with ink. Therefore a cuneiform book must necessarily be made of one or several clay tablets, which will either be merely dried or generally baked. Fire made them a lasting thing, very appropriate for valuable documents which had to be preserved. They could be transported with much greater safety than a papyrus roll.

It has been objected to me that certain passages go distinctly against the idea of the writing being cuneiform. Let me say at first



that I find a striking confirmation of it in the book of Deuteronomy (xxvii. 2). 'And it shall be, on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister; and thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law when thou art passed over.'<sup>1</sup> Commenting upon this passage, Dr. Driver says:<sup>2</sup> 'The letters were not to be carved in the stone (as is usually the case in ancient inscriptions) but to be inscribed with some suitable pigment, upon a prepared surface coated with lime or gypsum. This practice was Egyptian.' Dr. Driver is quite right, this practice was Egyptian; we find for instance in some of the tombs of the kings a thick coat of plaster over the walls, but it was not in order to paint the hieroglyphs, but to engrave them in hollow. It is exactly so in the case of the stones to be erected in Mount Ebal. The reason why this command is given 'thou shalt plaister them with plaister' is merely to enable Moses to impress upon it his cuneiform writing. The stones had to be unhewn, therefore they presented no flat surface; this would not be an obstacle to an inscription either painted or written with ink. But the plaister, a coating either of lime or gypsum, or merely of mud, was a very good surface for a cuneiform inscription, in which it would easily be impressed before the coating was dry.

Joshua, who carried out the command of Moses, erected in fact a stele inscribed with the law. A stele, which in this case would have been large, required a stone appropriate for engraving. It is doubtful whether such a stone would have been easily found on the spot. Therefore Joshua makes one, on which he could write exactly as on the small clay tablets, so that, as he is told, he could 'write upon the stones all the words of the law very plainly' (*σαφῶς σφόδρα*). This word 'plainly' probably meant 'in large characters'. The same must be understood of the command 'and thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thy house and upon thy gates'.<sup>3</sup> The houses built in raw bricks were and still are covered with a coating either of plaster or of mud, and if the door-posts were of stone, the cuneiform could be engraved without difficulty.

These passages, especially the first, do not militate in the least against the idea that the script was cuneiform, but supposing what is said about the door-post and the gates were considered as going against it, we must remember that the text we have is not the original; it is written in square Hebrew, cuneiform and clay tablets no longer existing, and if the command was to be binding on the contemporaries

<sup>1</sup> I always use the Revised Version.

<sup>2</sup> On Deut xxvii. 2. *The Polychrome Bible*, Joshua, p. 67.      <sup>3</sup> Deut. vi. 9.

of the rabbis who adopted that writing, at that time the law could only be written or painted on the door-posts in square Hebrew, it could not be done otherwise.

There is one passage of which I really do not understand how it could be opposed to me. It is these words in Deuteronomy: xi. 18 'therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul; and ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes.' Could the reference conceivably be to clay tablets? says my opponent, Mr. Wiener. The reference is certainly not to clay tablets, no more than to any other writing or material. Can we imagine that the Israelites are commanded to wear, bound to their hand, a piece of skin or papyrus on which a few words of the law are written, and another between their eyes? Nor can we suppose that these few words were tattooed on their hands or their foreheads. We must remember that the ancients, who had not, like the Greeks, a philosophical language, were obliged to use figures; they had to express abstract ideas by something falling under their senses. Here we have certainly figurative language. The LXX do not employ the same figures, they say: 'You shall throw the words into your hearts . . . and you shall bind them as a sign which will be unmoved before your eyes.' These expressions are of the same kind as this, which decidedly cannot be taken in a literal sense: 'Let thine heart keep my commandments: . . . write them upon the table of thine heart' (Prov. iii. 3).

The books of Moses were impressed on clay tablets in Babylonian cuneiform, the written language of Western Asia in his time. This idea has been put forward before me by Colonel Conder and Professor Sayce. It rests, as we have seen, not on literary arguments, not on inference made from the contents of the books, not on the supposed existence of authors which are pure literary creations, but on contemporary documents, on clay tablets coming from Mesopotamia and Palestine, before Moses and of his time, documents which we can read ourselves.

Some critics will say it is of no importance whether cuneiform was used in the time of Moses, since Moses did not write a single line of the Pentateuch, the oldest source of which is the Jahvist in the ninth century. I have shown in another place that Genesis and all the parts of Exodus concerning Egypt could not have been written by any one but Moses. I dwelt also on that point in my first lecture, in which I endeavoured to prove that the hypothesis of the various authors whose work was put together by a redactor has no true historical basis.

Since Moses wrote on cuneiform tablets, we have to alter completely our methods of studying his writings. We have to do away with our present definition of a book. A book is something which unfolds itself from beginning to end with a plan settled beforehand. It is quite different with Moses, who is not a professional writer. He takes his tablets when he feels inclined or inspired to do so, he may be either a poet, or a lawgiver, or an historian, according to circumstances. Even when he writes Genesis, which has an historical character more than his other books, he is not obliged to follow the chronological order. He may write the history of Joseph before the narrative of the Creation. He is not bound by a strict plan, nor by the cut-and-dried rules of the present day; he can give his tablets the proportions he chooses, they may be unequal in length, as is the case in Genesis. Nor are they linked together as the chapters of a written or printed book. A cuneiform book is a collection of tablets, but such a collection as is the case in Genesis may have been made for a definite purpose, with a plan which the author keeps in view. It is not the plan of a writer, but more that of a lecturer who has in his mind an exact outline of what he has to teach or to prove. He may begin a lecture with a brief summary of what he said in the former, or he will revert to a fact mentioned before, on which he has to dwell for further developments; or, if he is reading a piece of literature, he may read over again the last sentence where he stopped. This is the cause of the apparent inconsistencies which we find in Genesis, of the necessary repetitions which have been interpreted as showing the hand of different writers.

It is quite possible that Moses set apart the tablets which form the book of Genesis, which are all written with a definite purpose. Nevertheless we do not know who divided his writings into five books. The rabbinical tradition, which to a certain degree is supported by Scripture, points to Ezra. I see no reason to discard it.

We said that it is quite possible that Abraham brought with him from Babylonia his religious books, his tablets which contained the history of the world and his pedigree down to his father Terah. There may have been more tablets than those preserved in Genesis; Moses had possibly to make a choice and to leave aside all that did not refer to the leading idea of Genesis, the setting apart of Israel for his mission in the world.

If the beginning of Genesis consists of the tablets brought by Abraham, it seems nevertheless evident that Moses rewrote them. There are already in the two first some Mosaic touches, some details which indicate the man living in Egypt, who wrote from there and

who sometimes inserts into his narrative details which reveal the writer who has Egypt before his eyes. Time does not allow me to quote any of them.

Curiously, the father of Higher Criticism, Eichhorn, in his studies on the Pentateuch, has come to a conclusion which has some analogy with ours.<sup>1</sup> Speaking of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, he says: 'Their appearance leads to the idea that those books, or at least a part of them, consist of detached essays contemporaneous with the wanderings of the Hebrews in the desert; these essays are linked together by the collector through inserted narratives. Everywhere one sees that these essays are separated, . . . nevertheless in these separate books one recognizes a kind of systematic order.' If instead of 'separate or detached essays' we put 'tablets', Eichhorn's description gives a fairly accurate idea of the composition of these books.

The most important consequence to be drawn from the fact that Moses wrote in Babylonian cuneiform is that these books are not original documents. In their present form they are not in the language nor in the script in which they were written. They have passed through two changes which we shall describe in the next lecture. Philological and literary criticism, on which rests the reconstruction of the Old Testament, has been exercised upon translations or adaptations of documents written in another idiom. Each tablet cannot be a mosaic of authors living at an interval of several centuries. All inferences drawn from particularities in the language, from grammar, from words or syntax, even the differences between Elohim and Jahveh, all these props of the system are withdrawn, and it must fall to the ground.

This is the clearest proof of the weakness of the whole construction. If the facts on which the system rests were really historical, they would be strong enough to withstand the test of the language. If the existence of various authors and books were well established, they would stand, no matter in what form they have come down to us. If they were real history, their outward garb, the language in which they are related to us, would be secondary, and would have no bearing upon their firmness. Here we have only restored to these books the form which they originally had, and that is enough to bring down the whole system, which falls to pieces because its base has been cut away.

I said (p. 42) that Colonel Conder had been the first to put forward the idea that Moses wrote in Babylonian cuneiform. A French

<sup>1</sup> *Einleitung ins Alte Testament*, ii, p. 356.

proofs of his assertion. We have no literary documents coming from Palestine in Canaanite alphabet, except the inscription of Mesha and that of Shiloah which can hardly be called literary, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, a document of a special character to which we shall revert in the next lecture.

Professor van Hoonacker's contention, which does not separate language from script, and the generally admitted opinion, would mean that already in David's time, and perhaps before this king, the Canaanite alphabet prevailed in the whole of Palestine, and had entirely superseded the Babylonian cuneiform, of which we have remains, while we have no trace whatever of the Canaanite. This idea, the conjectural character of which I still maintain, has been upset quite recently by a great discovery due to the eminent English scholar whom I may well call the father of Cretan archaeology, Sir Arthur Evans. The discovery is this: the origin of the Canaanite alphabet is not Semitic, this alphabet comes from the West, from Crete. Let us quote Sir Arthur's words:<sup>1</sup>

'The diffusion of late Minoan settlements along the south-eastern shore of the Mediterranean best explains the appearance of the pre-Hellenic forms in the Anatolian alphabets, while in Cyprus it unquestionably brought about the early introduction of a highly developed linear syllabary.

'But Cyprus was not the furthest goal of this colonizing enterprise from the Aegean sides. It was perhaps the ἀφορμή for that further advance to the extreme south-east Mediterranean angle which was to attach the name of Palestine to a large tract of the Canaanite littoral. It must at any rate be regarded as a remarkable coincidence that the close of the same period is marked in Canaan itself by the appearance of a system of linear script, wholly unconnected with the Semitic cuneiform, but presenting many points of correspondence with the Minoan alphabet, in other words the Phoenician alphabet.

'The participation of a large Cretan contingent in the Philistine conquests of Southern Canaan is well ascertained.'<sup>2</sup>

Sir Arthur gives a great importance to this Philistine conquest, which must have taken place about 1200 B.C., especially to the city of Gaza, 'Minoan Gaza'.

'As for the Phoenician alphabet, the attempts to trace it to an old Semite source like the cuneiform or still more to Egyptian hieroglyphs ended in failure. . . . In view of the preponderating influence of the Aegean civilisation on the coast of Canaan and the actual settlement there of the Philistine tribes, the derivation has to be considered of the Phoenician letters from a Minoan source.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Scripta Minoa*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Evans, *loc. cit.*, p. 86.

The comparison between the Phoenician and Minoan scripts shows particularly striking points of similarity, and we may say that the question of the origin of the Phoenician alphabet is solved.

Sir Arthur Evans thinks that the Philistine settlements may have extended considerably further north, at least to the neighbourhood of Carmel; some Aegean element may have intruded in Phoenicia itself. Here we shall venture to suggest to Sir Arthur Evans that if the Minoan settlements began with Cyprus, their extension must have reached at first the opposite coast, especially the places having good harbours like Tyre and Zidon, rather than the Philistine coast which had only poor anchorages, and, following Sir Arthur's history of the Minoan settlements, I should say with Mr. Hall that the origin of the Phoenician alphabet is to be found in the Cilician-Syrian coast-land.<sup>1</sup>

We can even draw from Sir Arthur Evans's discoveries this important inference, which I believe is stated now for the first time, viz. that Tyre and Zidon became powerful cities of navigators and merchants after they had received a colony of Minoans, these active seafarers and tradesmen who at one time must have ruled over a great part of the Eastern Mediterranean. If we contrast the conditions of these two cities at the time of the Tel el Amarna tablets with the reign of Hiram, we see that the change must have taken place about the same time as the conquest of the southern coast by the Philistines.

In the Old Testament the name of Phoenicians does not occur; it is used by the LXX as a synonym for Canaanite. Both names are geographical, but they mean also 'tradesmen'. The Canaanite alphabet was particularly appropriate to trade purposes, it could be written on any material, soft like papyrus, or hard like potsherds. For the inhabitants of Palestine it was a foreign alphabet coming from the coast, and since it appeared with the Philistines it would have been unknown in the time of Abraham, and certainly it did not prevail sufficiently to induce the writers to use it for their religious books.

I should say that it penetrated Palestine from the north, from Phoenicia. If we read the description of the construction of Solomon's temple, we read that the king was obliged to apply to Hiram, the king of Tyre, to whom he sent a great number of workmen who were to learn from the Zidonians how to hew timber. The Israelites seem to have been completely ignorant of the art of construction. They had to be taught by the Zidonians how to hew and fashion timber and even great stones; the metal work was also done or supervised

<sup>1</sup> *Aegean Archaeology*, p. 224.

orientalist, M. Philippe Berger, had also maintained that the Decalogue had been written in that way. It seems certain that not only Moses, but Joshua and later writers used the same language and script. I cannot bring here the arguments which seem to establish that cuneiform was occasionally used much later by prophets like Isaiah. This is also the opinion of Dr. Jeremias, a German scholar.

Let us now consider the universally adopted opinion as to the script in which the Old Testament was written. The Hebrews, down to the exile to Babylon and later on, had the same alphabet as the Phoenicians. This script, often called Old Hebrew, is that in which most of the books of the Old Testament have been written. At a date which cannot be fixed exactly, but which is certainly not earlier than Ezra, the Jews adopted a script which was derived, not from the so-called Old Hebrew or from Phoenician, but from Aramaic: it is the square Hebrew, the Hebrew of the Bible of the present day. We have absolutely no historical information whatever as to the motives which induced the Jews to change their script. Still less do we know when the writings of the Old Testament were transcribed from the so-called Old Hebrew or rather Canaanite into the square Hebrew. It seems probable that this change was due to the rabbis, some time about the Christian era.

Thus everybody admits that there has been a change in the script, but nobody seems to pay any attention to it, and it goes without saying that the present text in square Hebrew is the exact reproduction of the Canaanite, the only difference being in the form of the letters. Now since we do not know a Canaanite inscription older than that of Mesha in the ninth century, its date contributes to show that the writings of the Old Testament are not so old as they pretend to be. We must admit, however, of the existence of a Phoenician alphabet at the time of Solomon, when Hiram, the king of Tyre, corresponded with him, but it did not exist at the time of the tablets of Tel el Amarna, so that we may fix its limits to about 1000 or 900 B. C.

It has always been considered as an indisputable fact that before the square Hebrew the writings of the Old Testament were in Canaanite script. But, looking at this axiom in the light of new discoveries, it appears to be a mere hypothesis or a conjecture of which there is no historical proof whatever. A distinguished Hebrew scholar, who was in this place in the month of January, Professor van Hoonacker, writes to me: 'Too many facts seem to me to prove that the language called Hebrew or Jewish, such as it is represented in the Biblical writings, bears the marks of a history of many centuries.' I should be very thankful to the learned professor to give me these

by men of Tyre. Now, if we consider the enormous levies of men who were sent to Lebanon, working under the directions of Zidonians who were their instructors, it is natural to think that the Zidonians taught them also their alphabet. The accounts, probably on potsherds, of Hiram's servants hired by Solomon, whom Solomon had to pay, must have been made in Phoenician script. One cannot conceive industry in general, and such an enormous work as the building of the temple, being carried out without writing, and since the Phoenicians were the directing element, they brought their script, which probably the numerous officers sent to Lebanon to superintend work had learnt themselves. This seems to be the first record of the introduction of Phoenician influence and culture into Israel, but we have no contemporary monument of this epoch. It is quite possible that the king himself favoured the introduction of the Phoenician script for commercial purposes and for ordinary life. One can hardly think that he used it for religious books.

About one hundred years later we find Phoenician influence predominant in Samaria. In fact, the court of Samaria was a Phoenician court; Jezebel, the queen of Ahab who stirred up her husband to do that which was evil in the sight of the Lord (1 Kings xxi. 25), was the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Zidonians. She did a great deal to develop the worship of the Phoenician god Baal, which seems to have been introduced by Omri, Ahab's father. Among the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of the Asherah who ate at Jezebel's table, there were certainly a great number of Phoenicians, as well as among the officers and servants of the palace. Therefore the *ostraca* potsherds found by Mr. Reisner at Samaria, in what is supposed to have been Omri's palace, which are mostly notes concerning the royal cellar and its contents, are written with the Phoenician alphabet.

Omri was a conqueror, and he established his dominion over Moab. Moab was a small kingdom situated on the east of the Dead Sea, and speaking a Semitic dialect which, as we know from Nehemiah, was not the same as that of Jerusalem. On the site of Dibon, Moab's capital, has been found the stone of Mesha, the longest, the most ancient inscription in Phoenician character. It begins thus:<sup>1</sup> 'I am Mesha, son of Chemoshmelekh (or Chemoshgad), king of Moab, the Dibonite. My father was king over Moab thirty years, and I became king after my father.' After saying that he built a sanctuary to Chemosh as a token of thankfulness for the victories the god

<sup>1</sup> Bennett, *The Moabite Stone*, p. 49; Dussaud, *Les Monuments Palestiniens et Judaïques du Musée du Louvre*, p. 5.



granted him, he goes on: 'Omri king of Israel, he oppressed Moab many days because Chemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him, and he also said: I will oppress Moab. In my days he said thus. But I saw my desire upon him and upon his house, and Israel perished utterly for ever. Now Omri annexed the land of Medeba, and Israel occupied it his days and half his son's days, forty years, and restored it Chemosh in my days.'

This inscription shows that during forty years Moab and particularly one of its cities, Medeba, was held and oppressed by Omri and Ahab. It is the first act of war which the king mentions. It is natural to think that during the long period when the two Jewish-Phoenician kings, Omri and Ahab, ruled over Moab, they introduced the writing they used, the Phoenician. The Moabite dialect probably had no script of its own, and therefore when Mesha wishes to commemorate on a stele the deliverance of his kingdom, he does it in his own dialect, but he uses the script which has been taught to his people by his masters. We recognize here the influence of Samaria, which is Phoenician, and this stone certainly does not prove anything as to the religious books of the Hebrews.

The last monument which is considered as proving the existence of the Canaanite script in the whole of Canaan is the inscription of Shiloah, found at Jerusalem near the mouth of the rock-aqueduct made by Hezekiah, which runs from the spring of Gihon to the pool of Shiloah. It consists of six lines more or less damaged. It is an inscription of workmen who relate, as it is often done now when a long tunnel is pierced from both ends, where and how they met<sup>1</sup> . . . 'when yet there were three cubits to dig (they heard) the cry of one calling out to his fellow . . . on the day of the excavation they hewed this mine each to meet his fellow, pick to pick, and the waters flowed from the source to the pool.' This inscription seems to show that this rather complicated work, the digging of a canal of the length of a third of a mile, was done by Phoenician workmen.

One of the most remarkable sides of Phoenician civilization is the hydraulic constructions, not only their harbours, but the aqueducts and cisterns, which brought water into the cities. Some of them have been preserved, such as the wells of Ras el Ayin, which provided Tyre with water, or the cisterns and aqueducts of Carthage.<sup>2</sup> They were masters of this art in which they preceded the Romans. It seems natural that, having a work of this kind to execute, which

<sup>1</sup> Dussaud, *loc. cit.*, p. 23; Smith's illustrated *Bible Dict.*, Shiloah.

<sup>2</sup> Perrot, *Histoire de l'Art*, vol. iii, p. 354: Les villes et leurs travaux hydrauliques.

required skilled professional men, Hezekiah should have called for Phoenician workmen, just as Solomon had done for the building of the temple, and as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah did also; and the men engraved the inscription in their own script.

These three monuments, the ostraca of Samaria, the stone of Mesha, and the Shiloah inscription, are the three crushing arguments which I am supposed to have left unnoticed, and which were to destroy my so-called hypothesis of the Babylonian cuneiform as completely as Mesha boasts of having done to Ahab.

In these documents I see absolutely nothing which may lead us to think that the religious books of the Hebrews were ever written with that script. I find there only a foreign alphabet, the Phoenician, which originated beyond the sea, which came from the west, and which was used by the priests of Baal, if they had books, for their profane worship. Can one imagine that the script of the worshippers of Baal would have been chosen by any priest or prophet to reproduce the Law, part of which was said to have been written by the finger of God? Far from being convinced that even when Isaiah wrote 'upon a great tablet with the pen of a man' (viii. 1) he drew upon it the characters of the stone of Mesha, it seems to me that we have to drop the name of 'Old Hebrew' for that alphabet and call it only Canaanite, Phoenician, or even Samaritan. I am still waiting for the facts which will prove conclusively that, previous to the Captivity, the authors of the Holy Writ recorded the words of God with the letters of the Phoenicians.

In the next lecture we shall see how the books written in Babylonian cuneiform and the later ones assumed their present form.

## LECTURE III

### ARAMAIC AND HEBREW

IN the chapter entitled the burden of Egypt, where Isaiah describes a state of the country which in many respects seems to point to the time when it was divided between princes called here the princes of Zoan and Noph, before the twenty-sixth dynasty united it again under its sceptre, the prophet says this (xix. 18): 'In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts.'

In antiquity a language has no other name than that of the nation which uses it, or of the country where it prevails. For instance, in the inscription on the Cross, Latin is called '*Ῥωμαϊστί* the language of the Romans, which at Jerusalem was probably not very pure Latin. The 'language of Canaan' means a language spoken and written all over the country. We know now that this language spoken in the cities of Egypt was Aramaic. It is not thus called, because, if it had been, it would have signified to the people at that time the language spoken by the Arameans, and not in Canaan.

The second discovery, made also in Egypt and which has shed a light on the subject under study as completely unexpected as the tablets of Tel el Amarna, is the papyri from Elephantine. Professor van Hoonacker made here a complete description of these documents in three admirable lectures, which render it unnecessary for me to give any further account, either of the discovery of the papyri, or of their contents. I only wish to add that they date from the twenty-seventh year of Darius I (494 B.C.) or, according to others, from the second year of Xerxes (483 B.C.) to the fifth year of Amyrtaeus, who in 405 B.C. delivered Egypt from the Persian yoke. They cover therefore a period of from eighty to a hundred years, and they come from a colony of Jewish settlers at Elephantine, who had to protect Egypt against invaders from the south, but who were not merely a garrison of soldiers. The documents which this colony has left us are of various kinds: letters, either of a private or public character, the most important of which is the one addressed to Bagoas, the governor of Judah, asking that the temple which had been erected there by their fathers, and destroyed by the Egyptians, might be reconstructed; also legal deeds, even

literary fragments of the story of Ahiqar; an Aramaic translation of the great inscription of Darius at Behistun; besides a great number of *ostraca* potsherds which have inscriptions relating to everyday life.

These texts, although emanating from Jews, are exclusively Aramaic. Professor Sachau, the editor of the largest collection of them, says: 'I have searched with the keenest interest every bit, every fragment from Elephantine in the hope of finding something Hebrew, but in vain. The Jewish colony had Hebrew names, but everything written was in Aramaic.'

The historical school which I am trying to follow lays down as one of its main principles reliance on texts as they stand; not on the interpretation given to them by such or such a scholar, whatever be his eminence, but on their plain meaning. Here we have one which is very clear. Isaiah says that there will be five cities in Egypt speaking the language of Canaan. We have discovered one of these five cities, with its Jewish inhabitants, and we have before us the writings which they have left; not only their legal or literary language, but even *ostraca*, giving inscriptions of the same kind as we should trace on a scrap of paper. In all this literature every word is Aramaic, there is no Hebrew at all. The conclusion to be derived from the passage in Isaiah is that the language of Canaan was Aramaic. Evidently the Jews had brought it with them when they came over from Canaan; they had brought over, not the dialect spoken in a certain locality, not even that of the capital, Jerusalem, but the language which was used in the whole country, as Babylonian cuneiform had been before.

We saw in the last lecture that when Abraham came into Canaan he brought the Semitic dialect which he spoke, and that he found there as written language Babylonian cuneiform, a language which was used throughout the whole of Palestine, as we know, not from any conjecture or from any historical statement, but from the monuments themselves. Canaan had several dialects which persisted during many centuries, and we have traces of them in the Old Testament. They may have undergone some modifications in the course of time, but the differences in the spoken, unwritten languages of various localities were never wiped away. I need not remind you of the famous shibboleth (Judges xii. 6) which, showing the difference of dialect between the Gileadites and the Ephraimites, betrayed the latter and was the cause of their death.

In the book of Nehemiah we read: 'In those days also saw I Jews that had married women of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab, and their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod (Ἀζωτιστί) and

could not speak in the Jewish language (*'Ιουδαϊστί*) but according to the language of each people' (xiii. 23). Ashdod was a city of the Philistines, Ammon and Moab were on the east of the Jordan, so that, according to this passage, east and west of Judaea languages were spoken which were not Jewish. Moab, we have seen, was the country of the stone of Mesha, written in Phoenician script. From this passage we see that the inscription of the king of Moab was not Jewish, it was the vernacular of Moab, and therefore was not the language of the religious books of the Jews. As for Jewish, the passage from Nehemiah clearly indicates it as being the language or the dialect spoken at Jerusalem.

Even at the time of our Lord, the whole population of Palestine did not speak as the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The maid in the court says to Peter the apostle: 'Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilaean. . . . Of a truth thou art one of them, for thy speech betrayeth thee' (Matt. xxvi. 70, 73). Evidently a Galilaean was recognized at once by his way of speaking; the difference consisted probably, as in the dialects of the present day, in the form of the words and in the accent.

But the best proof that Jewish was the dialect of Jerusalem is in the narrative of the mission of Rabshakeh to King Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 26, Isaiah xxxvi. 11). The Assyrian general, standing 'by the conduit of the upper pool in the high way of the fuller's field', probably a place where a great many people could congregate, delivered his insulting message. 'Then said Eliakim . . . and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh: Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Aramean language, for we understand it, and speak not unto us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that are on the wall.' Rabshakeh disregarded their request completely, he 'stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language . . .' coarse and rude words. He speaks in the language of the people because he wishes to influence them; he employs their popular dialect, and not Aramaic, the language of the educated, as he would do if he had to address the king, who knew it as well as his officers.

Professor van Hoonacker, arguing against this interpretation of the passage, says: 'These words (of the officers) indicate clearly that the people congregated on the wall did not understand Aramaic. Is there any reason to suppose that on the wall there were merely people of the lower classes, who spoke and understood only the "patois" of Jerusalem, and had no knowledge of the literary language then in use? From the narrative in the second book of Kings, one must conclude that at the time of Hezekiah, about 700 B. C., Aramaic had not spread

into Judaea, even among the cultivated classes, . . . the literary language of Isaiah . . . was Jewish, the language of Canaan (xix. 18) which Rabshakeh thought necessary to learn. . . . If Aramaic had been the literary language of the time, everybody would have understood it.<sup>1</sup>

I beg Professor van Hoonacker's pardon, but it seems to me that his arguments about the people at Jerusalem are what I should call university arguments. Language, according to the old ideas, is the property of one nation, or one people; it has its fixed limits, and no difference is made between what the people speak and what they write, or what in our time they are taught in the schools. Let us look again at what takes place at the present day, and allow me to revert to my own country, which is still a very good example of what has taken place in all lands and times.

Take one of the German-speaking cantons like Berne, for instance, the seat of the Federal Government. The religious, literary, and legal language is German. All the books and newspapers are written in German. The discussions of the councils, the laws, the sentences of the courts of law, all are in German with occasional expressions borrowed from the popular dialect. This dialect is as vivid as ever, even among the upper classes, and it is by far the language best understood, because it is the popular language, and the first lessons given to the children are in this language. You would never talk otherwise to a labourer in the field. At the same time he knows enough of German to read his Bible and to understand his clergyman.

Or take a large factory at Zurich: the engineers and the directors speak German, all their correspondence is in German, but if they have an explanation to give to the workmen, it will be in the popular dialect which the men speak amongst themselves. And this takes place after years of compulsory education directed against the use of those popular dialects. You can quite imagine, fifty years ago, a peasant in the upper valleys of the Oberland or a labourer in a village not understanding German, but only his dialect. Even now the popular dialect is understood far better, especially if you do not address a man individually, and the more so if you have to shout something from a distance.

Now change the names of the narrative of Isaiah. Take two countries which would be in a somewhat similar condition towards each other as Assyria and Jerusalem, Germany and Berne. Supposing the officer stands below the walls of Berne and wishes to be understood by all the men standing on them; he wants the people to rebel

<sup>1</sup> *Une communauté Judéo-Araméenne*, Préface, p. vii.

against their chiefs and to listen to his proposals. Precisely because he wants to draw the people on his side, so that they may disregard the orders of their chiefs, he will be obliged to speak in the popular dialect, and the officers, afraid of the effect it may produce upon the defenders of the city, will shout to him: 'Speak to us in German (Deutsch) because we know it, and not in Bernese (Bärner Dütsch).'

The same illustration might be taken from the mountainous regions of Italy, from Germany, from Russia, from Spain—I hear also from England—from all countries where civilization and schools have not eradicated the popular language, and that is the case nearly everywhere. In all these places the man who wishes to be understood by the mass of the people, especially from a distance, will use the popular language; this does not mean that the language of the upper classes, the literary language, is for these people a sealed book, as Professor van Hoonacker maintains that it was at Jerusalem.

This seems to me the right explanation of the passage, an explanation derived from living men, from what we still see at the present day, and which *a fortiori* was much more prevalent in antiquity. To the ancients, the name of a language was that of the people who spoke it. Jewish, *Jehudith*, could only mean the language of the people of Judah, at the time of Hezekiah, and still more when Nehemiah was living among the *Ἰουδαῖοι* who had returned from Babylon. *Jehudith*, interpreted literally, means the local language of Judah, and consequently of its capital, Jerusalem; and when Professor van Hoonacker tells us that Jewish was a literary language which Isaiah means when he speaks of the language of Canaan, the eminent scholar will allow me to say that this assumption is purely hypothetical, and that we have no proof whatever that Jewish, *Jehudith*, was spoken throughout the whole of Canaan.

Indeed, the passage of Isaiah seems to me to show exactly the contrary. If Jewish had been the language of the whole country, Isaiah, living at Jerusalem and addressing the people of Judah, would have said: 'In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak Jewish,' and he would not have made a distinction between the language of Jerusalem and that of the cities of Egypt. Therefore this leads again to the conclusion to which we came before: that since the Jews in Egypt spoke and wrote Aramaic, and it is told us by Isaiah that they spoke the language of Canaan, Aramaic must be the language spoken and written in the land of Canaan, the written, literary language of religion, of laws, extending over the whole country, where at the same time might be found parallel to it popular dialects.

The Elephantine papyri are of the epoch of the Persian rule, but it

was not at that time only that the Hebrews had settled in Egypt. The prophets make frequent allusions to this fact. Already Hosea, who lived in the time of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, speaks of a permanent establishment of the Jews at Memphis (ix. 6): 'For lo, they are gone away from destruction, yet Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them.' In the remarkable letter to Bagoas about their temple, the Jews of Elephantine say: 'Already in the time of the kings of Egypt, our fathers had built the temple in the fortress of Yeb. And when Cambyses entered Egypt he saw this temple.' Cambyses, the Persian ruler, is the first of the kings of the twenty-seventh dynasty, who were all Persians. They put an end to the twenty-sixth dynasty of the Saïtes, thoroughly Egyptian, and some of whom were powerful princes; the second Neco wished to go through Palestine, and Josiah, in trying to oppose him, was killed at Megiddo. Josiah's time is that of Jeremiah, who, during his life, attempted without success to prevent the Jews from going to Egypt, and who was once carried away thither himself. So that there can be no doubt that there were Jewish settlements in Egypt in his time. Hosea is earlier than Jeremiah, since he died during the reign of Hezekiah. He already speaks of the settlement of Memphis, and Isaiah of the five cities speaking the language of Canaan, so that we may safely assert that already in the eighth century, perhaps even earlier, the Hebrews were migrating into Egypt and settling there, perhaps for fear of the Assyrians.

Those who formed the colony of Elephantine, and who built a temple there, may have been among the mercenaries whom Psammeticus II led to war against the Ethiopians. They were settled on the southern border of the country to protect it from the attacks of the Ethiopians, who not long before had conquered Egypt, so that some of the kings, like Tirhakah, had been Ethiopians.

The Hebrews settled in Egypt brought with them their own language, as they did also their form of worship and their God. It is hardly possible that they learnt Aramaic in Egypt. If they had forgotten their own language and adopted that of the country they inhabited, it would have been Egyptian and not Aramaic, the language of the country with which Egypt was at war. Nor can Aramaic be considered as a kind of diplomatic or official language used in the correspondence with the kings of Persia, since at Elephantine the usual pieces of writing, the familiar letters, the most trivial notices, for which they used potsherds as we do scraps of paper, were written in Aramaic. Hebrew was not their language, as we saw from Professor Sachau's quotation.



In antiquity and in many cases even in our times, religion and language go together, change of religion implies change in the idiom. For instance, it was with the Mohammedan conquest, which established Islamism in Egypt, that Arabic became the usual language of the country. At Elephantine, we see, on the contrary, that the Hebrews remain faithful to their worship, they keep the ceremonies and ritual which they had brought from their own country. They obey the commandments of the Law. We see absolutely no reason why there should have been a change in idiom and cult. The change to Aramaic could only have been since Cambyses had invaded Egypt. But he did not remain long in the country, and even if the successors put Persian governors in the cities and over the provinces, that would no more change the language of the inhabitants of the country than it does at the present day. So that we can come to no other conclusion except that Aramaic was the language of Canaan, whence the Hebrews came.

When we were considering the early times, for instance those of Abraham and Moses, we saw that the 'Tel el Amarna tablets represented the country as having one or several spoken dialects and one written literary language, Babylonian cuneiform, which was the literary language of the whole of Western Asia. It happened in Palestine the same as in Mesopotamia, in parts of Syria and Asia Minor, script and language became Aramaic and superseded Babylonian cuneiform, which did not disappear. Cuneiform was still used for documents which had to be preserved, like contracts or certain religious books, and in large inscriptions like that of Behistun, which is of the time of Darius.

The reason of the change is obvious: Cuneiform cannot be written on anything except wet clay; it cannot be written on soft material like papyrus, paper, skin, vellum, because it is not a scripture properly speaking, it is an impression; there is no drawing of the character, it is the pressing of the stilus in certain directions and in various lengths that gives it its shape, for which no ink or colour is necessary. It can be imitated by engraving on stone, inscriptions may be made in *repoussé* work, like the so-called bronze gates of Balawât. Cuneiform therefore was not sufficient for the requirements of everyday life, it was absolutely necessary to have another script, which was Aramaic.

We find Aramaic written in countries where there was cuneiform. Aramaic was no more the property of the inhabitants of one definite country, than Babylonian had been before. Therefore we must not consider it as being introduced by conquest, but rather as an evolu-

tion of the language and script which was necessitated by the special nature of cuneiform, an insufficient and unpractical kind of script. The people who had used cuneiform adopted Aramaic quite naturally, as a useful and necessary instrument.

Who was it who first wrote Aramaic? Where did it originate? We cannot say. Probably among some tribe or people of Mesopotamia. From there it spread over the nations which used cuneiform and spoke Aramaic dialects. For we must not consider the Arameans as being a definite people with political boundaries. They form an ethnic group, the first residence of which was probably Mesopotamia. The Hebrews called themselves Arameans; this name is applied to them in the Elephantine papyri. There are several Arams: Aram Naharaim, Paddan Aram, Aram Zobeh and Aram Bethrehob, and others. Aram is the name of Syria, the kingdom of Ben Hadad, whose capital was Damascus. In the eighth century, when the Hebrews were bringing Aramaic into Egypt, local princes wrote in North Syria in the Araman, long Aramaic inscriptions which have lately been discovered.

In Assyria, where cuneiform was still prevalent for all official inscriptions, especially for records of the campaigns and victories of the kings, we find curious instances of Aramaic. We have Assyrian clay tablets with dockets written on the sides. These tablets are generally contracts; the dockets give the names of the people concerned, and also a short summary of what the tablet contains. This shows clearly that the people who made the contract could not read the cuneiform; therefore the summary of it was in the language and script they used every day. One of the most ancient is of the time of Sennacherib, at the beginning of the seventh century. Bronze weights in the form of lions have Assyrian and Aramaic inscriptions. The Assyrian gives the date and name of the king; it is the official part, the royal mark, which in our time would be impressed by a controller of the measures and weights. The quantity, the weight expressed, is given in Aramaic, naturally the shopkeeper or the purchaser cared for that only, and therefore it had to be in the popular language.

But what is most telling as a proof of Aramaic being contemporaneous and even simultaneous with cuneiform is a piece of sculpture found at Kuyunjik by Layard.<sup>1</sup> It represents scribes writing down the number of the heads of slaughtered enemies. They have in their hands a roll, either of skin or of papyrus, and they write with a pen or reed. This shows that they do not write cuneiform. They do not hold clay tablets, but a roll of flexible material, and their instrument is not a stylus. The natural inference to be drawn from this is that

<sup>1</sup> Layard, *Niniveh and its Remains*, in 12th ed., p. 357.

they write Aramaic, as the scribes of the tablets which are of about the same time. We know also that the Assyrian kings employed for their archives Aramaic as well as Assyrian scribes, and the king Esarhaddon prays his god Shainash for the welfare of his Assyrian and Aramaic writers.<sup>1</sup>

If, as seems to me established by the Elephantine papyri, the written language of the Hebrews, the language of Canaan, was Aramaic, we have to derive from it a very weighty conclusion, which may well be called revolutionary, using Dr. Briggs's expression, viz. that the writings of the prophets were in the literary language of the country, in Aramaic. This conclusion I expressed two years ago with some hesitation; but, giving to the facts revealed to us by the papyri their proper value, and after Sir Arthur Evans's discovery, I am able to state it to-day with greater assurance. I know this idea, as Professor van Hoonacker says, will have very little success among Biblical scholars; others, like Professor Koenig, will call it moving in a circle of errors. But you will allow me to observe that this conclusion rests mainly on the Elephantine papyri, viz. on documents which everybody may see and study. I make no theories, I do not invent a host of absolutely unknown authors, I merely start from this fact, which seems to me in accordance with elementary common sense, that colonies settling abroad speak the language which they have brought from their own country, and do not adopt in their new home a new idiom which is unknown in the country where they settle, and which one does not see how they could learn.

The generally received opinion, even of those who admit that a certain degree of Aramaic influence might have been exerted owing to the intercourse between Israel and Damascus, is that the prophets Hosea and Amos spoke to the Israelites before the exile in Hebrew. They would have felt an antipathy against the language of the hereditary enemy.<sup>2</sup> Leaving aside this explanation given by Dr. Schiffer, to the best of my knowledge it is the unanimous opinion of Biblical scholars that the language written as well as spoken by the prophets was Hebrew.

Now, I shall begin by asking my learned opponents: What is Hebrew? Where do you find it? In the Old Testament there is no language of that name, and in Isaiah we find only two languages: Jehudith (Jewish) which is clearly from its name and from what we read in Nehemiah the idiom of Judah and chiefly of its capital, Jerusalem, and the other the language of Canaan. To say that these

<sup>1</sup> Schiffer, *Die Aramaeer*, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

two names are absolutely synonymous, that the idiom of Jerusalem was used throughout the whole country, and that all the writers before the Exile wrote in that language, is a mere hypothesis the proof of which I seek in vain. While, on the contrary, the papyri of Elephantine show us that the language of Canaan was not Jehudith, but Aramaic.

Another question which I have to ask is this : This Hebrew which is supposed to have spread over the whole of Canaan, what was its script ? Aramaic is out of the question from your point of view ; as for Canaanite or Phoenician, we saw, according to the latest discoveries, that it was a foreign importation from the West, from the coast, introduced into Palestine from Phoenicia and, having become the script of Samaria, became that of the Samaritan dialect. This again is proved by monuments, the *ostraca* found in the palace of Omri. Can we suppose the prophets, the worshippers of Jahveh, the men of Jerusalem and Judaea, using for their writings the script of the hated Samaritans ? and in this case may we not argue of the antagonism between Jews and Samaritans, which is clearly enough expressed by the question of the Samaritan woman to Jesus : (John iv. 9) ‘ How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me which am a Samaritan woman ? ’ even admitting that the following words are not in all the manuscripts : ‘ For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.’

Here also we may, in my opinion, use an argument which is somewhat dangerous, and which has often been misused : viz. the total absence of any Jewish text of the Old Testament in the Canaanite writing. I say intentionally *Jewish* text, because we have in that writing the Samaritan Pentateuch. Therefore it cannot be argued that, owing to the climate or to other circumstances, all texts written in Canaanite have disappeared. Here is one, a long one, a religious text of the utmost importance, the base of the creed and worship of a city and its dependence, and it has survived in that Canaanite script. Can we suppose that the Jews valued their law less than the Samaritans did theirs, that they did not take as good care to preserve it ? On the contrary, we hear only of the utmost reverence of the Jews for their religious books, of the jealous care, more like worship, which they felt for them, so that it cannot be supposed that they allowed them to be lost.

An eminent Samaritan scholar, the Rev. Dr. Gaster, tells us that he has come to the definite conclusion that we have in the Samaritan Pentateuch the Pentateuch of the Ten Tribes. Now, considering the difference between the worship of Samaria and that of Jerusalem,

and the antagonistic feeling which existed between the two, it is natural to suppose that the Samaritans wished to have a book of the Law which would be their own, and which was not that of Jerusalem. Therefore, in addition to the dogmatic differences in their Pentateuch, they must have written their law in the script which we know to have been that of Samaria, the script of their own city. This distinguished it clearly from the Pentateuch of Jerusalem, and the fact that the Samaritan Pentateuch was written in Phoenician seems to me a proof that the Jerusalem Pentateuch was not in that script.

If, as it is generally admitted, the prophets and all the writers of the Old Testament, the oldest of whom is the Jahvist of the ninth century, wrote in the Phoenician script, what was the reason of their changing it for the square Hebrew? To my knowledge, nobody ever explained why the rabbis should have given up their old writing, the original alphabet of their books, for one derived from Aramaic, while the Samaritans had strictly preserved the old characters.

Here we find a strange omission on the part of the critics; they do not stop at this question of the script, of the alphabet, they do not inquire into the formation of the text. They always quote the Massoretic text in square Hebrew with its quite late vowel system, as if it were an original. They are obliged to admit the change, since nobody believes the square Hebrew to be old, but they presuppose that the new text reproduces exactly the old one, and that there is no other alteration than that of the letters.

Now, putting the Phoenician alphabet in its proper place, giving it its true character, a foreign script imported from the West and which became that of Samaria, we find that in Palestine there was no other writing than Aramaic; Aramaic was the only written language of the Hebrews. As for Jehudith, the vernacular dialect of Jerusalem, it had no script of its own, it was unwritten until what used to be called 'the change' took place; until the rabbis adopted the square Hebrew, not in order to replace another, but to put in writing the language of Jerusalem, the Jehudith, which had been unwritten till then. The work of the rabbis was not a change, it was a creation.

What seems to me a very important confirmation of the Hebrew religious books being in Aramaic is the fact that the name of God is Aramaic. The Jews from Elephantine have taught us that the name of God was JAHU or JAHO. The H in the middle of the word being weak, one can understand the name becoming

IAO, IO, especially in the transcriptions in foreign languages. This was certainly the name of God used in Canaan; one cannot conceive these men settling in Egypt adopting another name for God than that with which they were familiar. The proof of it is in the proper names found with the name of God: in their complete form, when the name of God is at the end, it is JAHU: Jeshaiahu, Isaiah; Jehiskiahu, Hezekiah; Uzziahu, Uzziah; Jeremiahu, Jeremiah; Hilkiahu, Hilkiah; Joshiahu, Josiah; I might quote many others. Generally, in the pronunciation, these names are shortened, the end vowel falls off, and these names become Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Hilkiah.

But if we take those where the name of God is at the beginning, there we find it complete. There are a great number of examples: Jehoshua, Jaho is my helper; and, not as the dictionaries give it, Jahreh is my helper; Jehonathan, Jonathan, Jaho gave him; and in the same way we have Jehoram, Jehojakin, Jehohanan, Jehojada, and many of the same kind. Grammarians and lexicographers have taken great pains to explain how from JAHVEH could be made JAHO. But all these explanations, given with a great amount of philological learning, are quite useless. There is no transformation from JAHVEH, JAHO is the name of God, and there is no proper name found with JAHVEH complete.

As to the origin of the name, such as it is given in Exod. iii. 14, we have here a very curious instance of what we call popular etymology. The name of God is derived from the verb 'to be'; the Hebrew word 'to be' does not lead to the word 'Jahveh', and therefore the lexicographers like Koenig say that here is employed a rare form of the verb 'to be', which is old and poetical. God says: 'I am that I am', and Professor van Hoonacker very aptly says that when Moses delivered this message to the Hebrews, he employed the third person, and afterwards when men will utter this name, they will say 'he is he who is'. Now the third person present of the verb 'to be' (he is) in Aramaic is exactly the tetragrammaton, which is perhaps to be read JAHVEH, though it is not quite certain. The forms are absolutely correct and regular, we need not speak of artificial or conventional forms, we have only to turn to Aramaic.

This seems to me conclusive, for we cannot admit that the Hebrews would have called their national God by a name derived from a foreign dialect.

It is to be observed that this name is not unspeakable. It is not, as it was later on in the synagogue, forbidden to pronounce it—a prohibition which, we are told, was the reason for changing the

vowel points of the word, so that it might always be read 'Adonai', the Lord. If it had been criminal to say that word, it would not have been written in a letter sent to a stranger who had no respect for such religious prohibitions.

Various explanations have been given of the interdiction to pronounce the name JAHVEH. I do not pretend to solve this difficult problem, but you will allow me to suggest an explanation which I bring forward only as an hypothesis. Josephus, in his narrative parallel to that of the Bible, relates that when Moses received the command to return to Egypt, God revealed to him his name, which until then was unknown to men, and 'of which', says he, 'I have no right to speak.' Josephus, we know, stayed some time in Alexandria, he seems to have been well informed in Egyptian matters; he even wrote a book against an Egyptian, Apion. I believe Josephus follows here the Greek version of a verse of Leviticus, xxiv. 16, where the Hebrew reads: 'He that blasphemeth the Lord, he shall surely be put to death'; while in the LXX we find: 'He that names the name of the Lord, let him surely die.'

Certain critics assert that the version of the LXX is due to the synagogue of Alexandria. If it is so, it is not impossible that the synagogue reflects here Egyptian influence. The Egyptians attach great importance to names: to know the name of some genius or deity, or to speak that name, is the surest means of obtaining from him the favour required. Even if the deceased has to pass a door, he has to tell it its name. The knowledge of the name gives a certain power over the person or the object that bears that name; and we know of a myth where the goddess Isis plays a wicked trick upon her father Ra, causing him to be bitten by a serpent, in order that he may be compelled to reveal to her his mysterious name, so that she may rule over him by her enchantments. Overcome by his sufferings, the old god yields to his daughter and transfers to her his heart, which contains his mysterious name.

Far be it from me to suppose that the Alexandrian synagogue ever held such debased doctrines. Nevertheless I think it possible that the Egyptian conception of the name may have influenced to a certain degree the Alexandrian rabbis, and have induced them to introduce that prohibition which is not found in the Old Testament except in the translation of the LXX. As I said, this explanation is a mere suggestion, which I do not pretend to give as an established fact.

When did the authors of the Old Testament begin to write in Aramaic instead of cuneiform? This question is difficult to answer, for we have no definite clue. Babylonian cuneiform having origi-

nated in Mesopotamia and having spread from there over the whole of Western Asia as far as the Mediterranean, it is natural to think that the change of script and also of dialect took place in Mesopotamia. We cannot give a precise date to that change, which probably was gradual and did not take place at once throughout the whole of Asia. It may even have been quicker and more marked in countries which were not so well accustomed to cuneiform writing and where clay was not so abundant and not so much used as in Mesopotamia. We know that it was so in North Syria and in the region of the Amanus, in the eighth century. The inscriptions of Panammu are at present the oldest Aramaic documents known, but it seems likely that it must have spread west of Mesopotamia earlier, because it was the language and script most convenient for ordinary life.

About the books of the Old Testament following those of Moses I can only speak conjecturally. I should say that those which were historical and had more the character of official documents (like a great many tablets found in Mesopotamia), such as Joshua, Judges, and the two books of Samuel, were written on tablets in cuneiform, but that later on, especially in the case of books like the prophets, Aramaic prevailed, though occasionally cuneiform might still be used, either by the prophets themselves when they had something particularly solemn to write, or in contracts like those found in the excavations at Taanach or at Gezer.

Considering the numerous relations which Solomon had with foreign nations, one can imagine that it was in his time that Aramaic began to spread in Palestine; perhaps, at first, not in speech, but in writing. Nevertheless in his day the Law, the books of Moses, were still in cuneiform, and I cannot but maintain what I already set forth years ago, viz. that Solomon, when he built his temple, followed the example of the Assyrians and Egyptians, and put in the foundations or somewhere in the wall a cuneiform copy of the Law, or rather of Deuteronomy, because it was the best means of establishing for ever that Jerusalem and its temple was the locality designated by these words: 'the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there' (xii. 5), and which was to be His habitation. If Solomon followed the Assyrians, the document might have been a clay cylinder put under the wall, or if he followed the Egyptians, it might have been put under a slab of the pavement. Anyhow, one understands its being found during the repairs made by Josiah to the building.

What indicates that it was written in cuneiform seems to me to be that Hilkiah, the high priest, after the discovery hands the book to



the secretary of the king, Shaphan, who reads it out at once and carries it to the king, to whom he reads it again. Why does Hilkiâh, the high priest, not read it himself? Because he probably could not read cuneiform, while the secretary of state, Shaphan, who had to read the letters and treaties which came from Assyria, and also the legal documents written in cuneiform in the country itself (as we know from excavations), could read cuneiform easily.

Some pedantic objections have been made to this explanation of the narrative. Hilkiâh says: 'I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.' Therefore, Hilkiâh was not ignorant of cuneiform, since he found out that the document was the Law. But one can easily imagine that cuneiform was not absolutely unknown to Hilkiâh; especially if he could read in the first line of Deuteronomy the name of Moses, he would at once conclude that it was the Law, but he was not able to read it out straight off, as did Shaphan. Besides, it is not impossible that the tablet had an Aramaic docket like the contracts. Another criticism of the same kind is that the text does not say: 'and Shaphan read it *to him*.' But Shaphan did not come alone to Hilkiâh; the book of Chronicles gives the names of two other officers who were with him, and one can fancy Shaphan, very much interested in the discovery, beginning at once to read before the people who were present, without addressing especially the one or the other, as would be the case afterwards when he read the book to the king. I dare say you will agree with me as to the value of such objections.

Scripture gives us the name of the man who, I believe, put the law and the cuneiform books into Aramaic, viz.: Ezra. Next to Moses, he is described as the man who was most occupied with the Law; 'he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given': . . . and he 'had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgements' (Ezra vii. 6, 10). He was the second lawgiver of the Israelites, for the Old Testament knows only those two; there is no mention whatever made of the various authors of Jahvist, Elohist, and Priestly Code, and others who have been called into existence by the critics, and who are said to have written the laws, but to have concealed their names under that of Moses.

These texts seem very plain, and I see no reason to reject them, or to give them special interpretations which entirely distort their sense. Ezra came to Jerusalem at the time of the second return from captivity, nearly sixty years after the dedication of the temple in the year 516, so that it is absolutely certain that he was born in Mesopo-

tamia. Ezra was a ready scribe. This could only mean a man who was able to write the language of the country, Aramaic, and who knew also cuneiform, which was still in use; who could understand a cuneiform contract and write an Aramaic docket giving its summary, as the scribes were accustomed to do at that time.

He was 'a ready scribe in the law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given'. Like the Father of Higher Criticism, I discard at once this interpretation which may be found in several books, viz. : he was a ready scribe who wrote under the name of Moses laws which the Lord God of Israel was said to have given him; and I stick to the plain sense: he was a ready scribe in the law, which was that of Moses, and, as the king Artaxerxes calls him, the priest, the scribe, even the scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord, and of his statutes to Israel, or the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of Heaven. (Ezra vii. 11 and 12.)

We have seen in a former passage that to Ezra the law of God was the law of Moses, which the Lord the God of Israel had given, but it was not so only for him. Long before he came to Jerusalem, Zerubbabel, when he first arrived, before he began the foundations of the temple, he and the priests built an altar to the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, 'as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God.'<sup>1</sup> The first act they did after their return was in conformity with the law of Moses. Later on, when with the protection of Darius the Jews 'kept the dedication of the house of God with joy',<sup>2</sup> they offered sacrifices and 'they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their courses for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem, as it is written in the book of Moses'. Therefore, even in the ceremonial laws, they followed the book of Moses.

Sixty years afterwards appeared Ezra, why and how? Let us listen for an instant to Higher Criticism and quote the words of one of its representatives, Eduard Meyer, one of the masters of the historical school of Germany. 'The rich and influential Jews of Babylon succeeded in securing the authority of the King of Persia in order to execute the religious demands which one of them, the priest Ezra, the writer of the book of the laws of the God of heaven, had formulated as an inspiration given to Moses; by this book of laws we mean the second part of Exodus, the whole of Leviticus, the first part of Numbers, the Priestly Code . . . and thus they could enforce these laws on the renitent Jews of Jerusalem and the neighbouring country

<sup>1</sup> Ezra iii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ezra vi. 18.

was the script and idiom of that time; besides, there was no other. He would not have turned it into Canaanite; the so-called old Hebrew; it was the script and dialect of Samaria, we know this from the excavations, and Ezra would not have adopted the script and language of Jerusalem's greatest enemies, who tried repeatedly, not only to hamper, but to prevent altogether the reconstruction of the temple. It would have been treason for him to adopt the same Pentateuch as the Samaritans perhaps already had at that time. As for turning it into Jehudith, Jewish, the language of Jerusalem, it was not possible, since it had no script, the square Hebrew had not yet been invented.

How did Ezra come to have these writings of Moses 'in his hand'? Here, as in the case of Abraham, I am going to venture on a conjecture which I base upon the customs of the Assyrian conquerors. We see that all the vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, were restored by Cyrus to the Jews who went back with Zerubbabel. The vessels were known and had been set apart among the booty brought by the Assyrian conqueror from his various wars. But another custom of the Assyrian kings, which has proved most precious to us, was to have vast libraries in which were gathered thousands of documents 'dealing with every branch of learning and science known to the wise men of their day'.<sup>1</sup> We have recovered a great part of the library of Assurbanipal at Kuyunjik, a quarter of Nineveh. Another, larger still, was at Nippur, with which was connected a school, in the ruins of which have been found the tablets on which were the first lessons in writing. In the library itself, the contents of which are not yet completely unearthed, there are a considerable number of mathematical, astronomical, medical, historical, and legislative tablets, and also many religious texts, omens and incantations, mythological and astrological texts, hymns, and prayers, besides a considerable number of letters and contracts of a business and administrative character. At Kuyunjik were found 'hundreds of hymns and psalms, prayers and oracles, in their poetical expression and depth of religious feeling often not inferior to the best Hebrew poetry'.<sup>2</sup> There also were historical records and chronological lists, and all the documents concerning the wars, the tributes, the administration of provinces, and the like. It is not an extravagant hypothesis to suppose that the cuneiform tablets of the law of Moses, found when Jerusalem was captured, probably in the temple, were carried away with the

<sup>1</sup> Hilprecht, *Explorations in Bible Lands*, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Hilprecht, *loc. cit.*, p. 122.

vessels to Babylon, where they were deposited in one of these libraries, and that Ezra, having received the education of a scribe in one of these schools, had an opportunity of seeing these tablets and of making a study of them. I do not deny that what I suggest here is a mere conjecture, but undoubtedly it is in accordance with the customs of Babylonia, and with what we know of Ezra, of his being a scribe, and therefore having received the teaching which was given to such men.

It is interesting to notice that the two lawgivers of Israel, Moses and Ezra, were both men who had received a thorough education in the country in which they were born; Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and Ezra was a ready Mesopotamian scribe.

It seems probable that when Ezra turned the law of Moses into Aramaic, he divided it into five books. Before that it was only called the Law, and as it was on tablets one may suppose that it was one of these works consisting of a whole series like those found at Nippur.<sup>1</sup> Ezra may also have arranged these tablets in order, putting each of them in its proper place, so as to make a running and continuous text, which, having been turned into Aramaic, was on a roll of skin.

When he arrived at Jerusalem, Ezra found that 'the priests who had been set in the divisions and also Levites in their courses for the service of God, as it is written in the book of Moses' had broken the commandments; they had not separated themselves from the people of the land, and as he says (ix. 2) 'they have taken of their daughters for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the peoples of the land, yea the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass'. Ezra describes the shock which he received on hearing from the princes, so that 'he sat astonished until the evening oblation'. We have in his book his prayer, in which he made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God.

This seems to have produced such a great impression upon the people, that they gathered in great numbers around him, they confessed that they had trespassed against their God, and they declared themselves ready to make a covenant 'with our God to put away all the wives and such that are born of them . . . and let it be done according to the law'. Therefore these people recognized that they had trespassed against the law; they evidently acknowledged the authority of that law, and submitted to it so completely that they agreed to separate themselves from the strange women.

<sup>1</sup> Hilprecht, *loc. cit.*, p. 530.

of Judaea, who were occupied with quite different interests.’<sup>1</sup> I will not attempt to refute this interpretation of the texts, but only quote a sentence by the same author, found a little further, in which he gives us his judgement on the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah. ‘These two books were originally the end of a religious historical work written about 240 B.C., and the first part of which consists of the so-called book of Chronicles. The author seizes every occasion to let loose his religious fancy and has no insight whatever into the real events and their inner connexion.’<sup>2</sup> You remember that, according to Dr. Briggs, the chief merit of Higher Criticism is to vindicate the authority of Scripture.

According to the texts on which we shall rely,<sup>3</sup> as long that it is not proved that they are erroneous, Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of Moses; he must have been considered as such not only by his countrymen, but even by the Persians, by the king himself and his seven counsellors who sent him ‘to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of God which is in thine hand’.

At the same time ‘Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgements’. He did not study the Law only for himself, he was a teacher, he wished to instruct his countrymen in the law of God. We must notice that what Ezra and Nehemiah consider as most important, as really binding on their countrymen, is what they call the Law, the law of Moses. They occasionally mention the prophets, but they do not give them the same authority; the prophets’ task is to bring back the people to the law of Moses, but not to initiate new commandments and statutes.

Now, if he wished to teach the law of Moses to his people, it was necessary that this law should be in the religious language, in the literary language of the time. Therefore I cannot help thinking that he began with turning the cuneiform tablets into Aramaic. That is in perfect conformity with the circumstances of that epoch and those in which Ezra lived. He was born in a country where the literary language was Aramaic, he wrote Aramaic himself, he was a scribe, a learned man, who, like all the scribes who had to write contracts, was obliged to know cuneiform as well as Aramaic. This work was of the same kind as that of many scribes of Babylon and did not present great difficulties.

I believe therefore that it is to Ezra that must be attributed the turning of the old Mosaic cuneiform writings into Aramaic, which

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Meyer, *Der Papyrusfund von Elephantine*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ezra vii. 6, 14.

Is it likely that they would have done it so readily, if the Law had been something new to them, if Ezra had not revived in them the feeling of respect for a commandment which they knew, but which they had disregarded? For one can imagine that during the sixty years between the dedication of the temple and the arrival of Ezra, some of the commandments may have been forgotten or neglected, and when Ezra suddenly recalled them, it produced an effect of the same kind as when the Law was discovered under Josiah.

If, according to Eduard Meyer, Ezra had brought them a law of his own invention, which he had concocted with the well-to-do Jews of Babylon, would the Jews of Jerusalem have submitted at once, would they so easily have dismissed their wives? For where would Ezra have found the authority to enforce the law upon them? The letter of the king of Persia does not enact a new law or commandment, it only says this: 'What is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven.' Ezra does not pretend to bring to the Jews the words of God; he does not come forward as a God-sent legislator or even as a prophet; he does not say, like Isaiah or Ezekiel: 'Thus saith the Lord'; he always speaks of the law of Moses, and this law of Moses must have appealed to the feelings of his countrymen. Otherwise there would probably have been opposition to what he commanded, and he would not have so quickly secured the obedience of his countrymen.

Did Ezra remain in Jerusalem, or did he return to Babylon? We cannot tell, we do not hear of him again till Nehemiah also came to Jerusalem, and the law was solemnly proclaimed: 'They spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation' (Neh. viii. 1-5). Therefore Ezra was well known as a man who had a thorough knowledge of the law and had it in his possession. 'Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; . . . and he opened the book in the sight of all the people; . . . and when he had opened it all the people stood up.' Therefore they all wished to hear that law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

Here there is an important point to note: The Levites 'caused the people to understand . . . and they read in the book in the law of God distinctly'. Here the margin says: 'With an interpretation, and they gave the sense so that they understood the reading' or 'caused them to understand'. This seems to show clearly that the Law was not written in the language spoken by the hearers. The Law was in Aramaic, and the idiom of the people was Jewish, the dialect

of Judah and Jerusalem, which, as we know from Nehemiah also, was not the idiom of regions so little distant as Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. The Levites did what an English clergyman would do in a country parish in Yorkshire or Norfolk, if he were explaining the Bible in the dialect of the peasants.

But what is particularly striking is that we have here a proof that the law of Moses which they had, and out of which they read during several days, was the whole of the Pentateuch. We find it summed up in the prayer of the Levites. We recognize, gathered and put in their proper places, all the components which the critics have assigned to different authors and to different dates. This prayer begins with an abridged history of the people of Israel, but the longest and most detailed part is that which is related in the Pentateuch.

(ix. 6) 'Thou art the Lord, even thou alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all things that are thereon, the seas and all that is in them, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.'

'Thou art the Lord the God,'  
Jahveh Elohim.

The fact of God being the creator, we know from the first chapter of Genesis, that is the Priestly Code. There is no mention of man's creation except in the few words of the following verse.

You remember the two names of God, which are at the beginning of the narrative of the creation of Adam, and where Elohim is said to have been added by the redactor (p. 23). Here these two names sum up chap. ii.-iii. 24.

It is not of Adam that they have to speak, they go over at once to Abram :

'Thou didst choose Abram and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees' . . .

'and gavest him the name of Abraham' . . .

'thou madest a covenant with him' . . .

'to give him the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite and other nations' . . .

This is Jahvist.

Priestly Code.

Jahvist.

Redactor of Genesis.

I cannot make here a complete analysis of this prayer. All the documents of the critics are found in it. We have already recognized three, here are three more:

‘In their rebellion they appointed a captain to return to their bondage.’

Numbers xiv. 4. ‘And they said to one another: Let us make a captain and let us return into Egypt.’ This is J E, the document where J and E cannot well be separated.

‘Yea, when they had made them a molten calf and said: This is thy god that brought thee out of Egypt.’

These last are the very words of Exodus (xxxii. 1–8): ‘These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ This is due to the Elohist, the writer of the Northern Kingdom in the eighth century.

At the end of the narrative drawn from the Pentateuch we find Deuteronomy:

‘Moreover, thou gavest kingdoms and peoples . . . so that they possessed the land of Sihon . . . even the land of the king of Heshbon . . .’

In Deuteronomy ii. 24. ‘I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land.’

And this passage, which is most striking:

Nehemiah: ‘Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, and they lacked nothing, their clothes waxed not old and their feet swelled not.’

Deuteronomy viii. 4: ‘Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy feet swell these forty years.’

I cannot carry this analysis further. Nearly every sentence of this prayer, as far as verse 24, can be traced to one of the so-called documents of the Pentateuch, and, according to the opinions of the critics, some of these documents did not yet exist in Nehemiah’s time. One of them is the Priestly Code, which the prayer quotes in other sentences than those I have mentioned, for instance in what is said of the sabbath, where it clearly alludes to Leviticus. If this book is what the critics contend, it could not have been written at the time of Nehemiah. Its authors, the priestly school described by Professor Skinner<sup>1</sup> as ‘a school of juristic writers whose main task was to systematize the mass of

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, p. lviii.



ritual regulations which had accumulated in the hands of the Jerusalem priesthood, and to develop a theory of religion which grew out of them', was certainly not yet founded at Jerusalem, where there was hardly a settled government, and where the temple had not even been completely reconstructed. And the redactor of Genesis, who is supposed to have made a book from 264 fragments, probably was not yet born.

The prayer goes on describing the conquest of Canaan from the book of Joshua, and afterwards it sums up what we call the religious history of the Israelites to the day of the festival, mentioning the prophets, but not one single name, not even that of David, and this part of the prayer is shorter and much less precise than that which is derived from the Pentateuch. It deals with generalities and not with definite facts, such as the giving of the Law by the hand of Moses. Evidently, to Nehemiah as to Ezra, the Law is the basis of their faith, it is the foundation on which rests their existence, and both they and the people regard this law as written by one man.

According to rabbinical tradition, Ezra settled the canon of Scripture, restored, corrected, and edited the whole sacred volume. This seems quite in keeping with what we know of him, as being a Jew, a Mesopotamian scribe, and being engaged in the same kind of work as such men. For compiling the sacred volume, the first thing he had to do was to turn into Aramaic the cuneiform tablets of Moses and the early writers. Aramaic spread more and more in Palestine and became also a spoken language, without superseding entirely the Jehudith, the dialect of Jerusalem and Judaea. The sacred books must all have been in Aramaic. Our Lord quotes the twenty-second psalm in that idiom, and certainly the other ones used in the temple were in the same language. I cannot help thinking that, if the Psalms were in Aramaic, it must have been the same with Isaiah, the prophets, and generally the books which, with the Law, were read in the synagogues.

In this sense Ezra would have been the second legislator of Israel. The law originated with Moses, it was revived by Ezra's action after a temporary disappearance, when God's people were again in Jerusalem. Scripture mentions only these two men with a legislative capacity; there are no other lawgivers, and I see no reason to divide their work between several composers for whose existence nothing vouches except the conjectures of the critics.

Since the books of the temple and of the synagogue were in Aramaic, the translation of the LXX was made from an Aramaic text, and this is confirmed by what we read in Josephus. He relates

that Demetrius of Phaleron, the librarian of Ptolemy Philadelphus, advised the king, in order to enrich and complete his library, to have the books of the Jews translated, which were well worthy of being placed in the king's collection of volumes of all kinds. He says that these books were written with the characters and in the language of the Jews. This is clear: The language of the Jews in Egypt, we know it from the Elephantine papyri, was Aramaic. This sentence alone is sufficient to prove that the translators worked on Aramaic texts.<sup>1</sup>

But this is not all. The librarian says that 'the characters are similar to those of the Syrians, and their language sounded alike', this points decidedly to Aramaic, 'but that it was of a peculiar kind (*ιδιότροπον*).<sup>2</sup> These last words are not in all manuscripts, some read 'but have certain peculiarities', which can only refer to the books mentioned just before, and of which it is said that they would be very difficult to translate. This shows, not as some of the translators have understood, that these books were in a language distinct from the Syrian, but that their tone was peculiar and unknown. It is certain that the books of the Hebrews must have sounded very strange to Greek ears, and a great many points must have embarrassed the translators, for instance, the names of God, and particularly that of Jahveh, which, following the Alexandrian synagogue, they rendered by 'the Lord'.

We cannot consider as historical the narrative of Josephus, who, copying Aristaeus, tells us of the seventy-two old men, sent by Eleazar from Jerusalem, who translated the books of the Law. It is quite probable that the whole sacred book was not translated at once. The translators who worked under the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus may have begun with the Law, and it seems probable, as M. Théodore Reinach supposes, that it was under the influence and for the benefit of the Jewish congregation at Alexandria that Ezra's Aramaic version was turned into Greek.

The consequence is that the LXX is older than the Massoretic text, as is evident from passages where they differ from the Hebrew text, especially where there are geographical names, as in the book of Joshua. And this opens up a prospect that some day Egypt may again bring unexpected help to the study of Scripture. Among the numerous papyri which have been discovered, there are fragments of the LXX. It is not unreasonable to hope that some day a fortunate excavator may bring to light a complete copy of the LXX.

We have now only one more step to take. How did Ezra's Aramaic version become the Hebrew of the Bible, written in the square Hebrew?

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* XII, ii, 1.

All Hebrew scholars agree that the square Hebrew is of a recent date. Koenig says it appears first in the year 176 B. C., but the general opinion places it later. It is completely formed in the inscriptions of Jerusalem and its surroundings, which are about the time of the Christian era, but then it is found only in inscriptions, and they may be earlier than manuscripts.

Many years ago an eminent French scholar, le Marquis de Vogüé, established that the square Hebrew was a derivation, not from the Canaanite or Phoenician, but from Aramaic, and this has now been universally adopted. The text of the Old Testament was therefore constituted in this way, according to the critics: It was written in Hebrew, the original language of the Jews, the language of Canaan, the oldest written specimen of which is the Song of Deborah in the Book of Judges. The alphabet used for these books down to the Christian era was the Canaanite or Phoenician, to which for this reason the name of Old Hebrew has been given. At a date which is approximately the Christian era, the script was changed, the so-called Old Hebrew was abandoned and a new alphabet was adopted, which was derived, not from that which had been used for about ten centuries, but from Aramaic, the script of a foreign language then spreading more and more in Palestine.

Nobody denies the change of script which is considered as something quite secondary, and as having taken place naturally, without affecting the language of the books. It is rather surprising that this adoption of a new script should have been treated as an indifferent matter, and that no one should have inquired why this change took place, what was the reason of it, and why the rabbis, who were the authors of a new script for their books, did not adopt a modification of their own alphabet, which had been used from early times and for centuries, instead of having recourse to that of an alien tongue.

The views as to the history of the Old Testament, to which we have been led by the most recent discoveries, offer us a ready explanation of this change and of its character. We have maintained that the Hebrews, being Arameans, had a literary and linguistic life, intimately connected with that of the Mesopotamians. They were an Aramean people speaking their own dialect and having Babylonian cuneiform as a literary and written language. This we have learnt from the discovery of the tablets of Tel el Amarna and Boghaz Keui. In Palestine, as in Mesopotamia, Babylonian cuneiform became Aramaic language and script, Aramaic was the literary language of Canaan, a language which was used also in ordinary life. This language of Canaan was revealed to us by the Elephantine papyri.

Parallel with the literary language (with Aramaic), Jewish (*Jehudith*) was still the spoken and unwritten dialect, the 'patois' of Jerusalem, for Jewish was not written in Canaanite characters. This alphabet came from the northern coast, from Phoenicia, and was adopted by the Samaritans, as we know from the *ostraca* found at Samaria and from the Samaritan Pentateuch. After the return from the captivity the Jews had neither language nor script of their own for their sacred books, which were part of the Aramaic literature.

The return from captivity is the birth of Judaism. Those who returned were only the remnants of Judah and Benjamin, part of the Southern Kingdom. From that time the whole life of the nation is concentrated in Jerusalem. The old kingdom of David and Solomon is no more. Israel has become Judah, the name of Jews supersedes that of Israelites, they still speak *Jehudith*, it is their dialect, though Ezra reads to them the Law in Aramaic.

From that time also Jerusalem assumed greater importance, the more so since the ten tribes never joined Judah again, and we notice the tendency of its inhabitants, which comes out so strongly in the New Testament, to consider themselves as the elect, those who had Abraham for their father, and who felt an undisguised contempt for the Gentiles. Their national existence was intimately connected with their worship, and with the strictest observance of their law. But such as it came out of Ezra's hand, this law, their sacred books, had no national Jewish garb, it was only a part of the Aramaic literature.

It was necessary to separate the books of Moses and the prophets from foreign writings, so that they should become exclusively Jewish. The hated Samaritans had that privilege, they could not be confused with the Jews or with the other neighbours, since they had their Pentateuch written in their own script and in their own dialect, which differed but little from that of the Jews. I believe the rabbis did the same as the Samaritans. They had their own dialect, the dialect of Jerusalem, the *Jehudith*, which was probably very old and had changed but little in the course of time, as is very often the case with popular idioms. It may have been very similar to that which was spoken by the people on the wall in Hezekiah's time. Of this spoken dialect, they made a literary language by adapting to it a script, the square Hebrew; the new alphabet was derived from Aramaic, to which they were accustomed. It did not differ much from it, but sufficiently to be distinguished. When they turned their books into *Jehudith*, or, as we may call it now, Hebrew, the difference was merely dialectical, as one may judge in reading

the papyri of Elephantine, which any one knowing Hebrew will understand.

The change from the Aramaic script to the square Hebrew is not a mere alteration of the script without any importance; it is the giving to Hebrew its existence as an individual language; it is making a literary language out of a popular dialect; and in fact, the rabbinical literature rose and grew from the moment when the square Hebrew was invented. The script was not perfect from the beginning, for a long time the rabbis improved it, and it was complete only with the adoption of the vowel points several centuries afterwards. Jewish, the spoken dialect of Jerusalem, written in square Hebrew, is the Hebrew of the Bible. Therefore a new script was necessary, and we understand why the new alphabet was derived from Aramaic. The so-called change was made for very grave and serious motives, it was not a mere literary fancy or a graphic simplification, which are the only reasons at present attributed to it.

And now, having taken the final step and reached the present form of the Old Testament, I may be allowed to revert to my starting-point and to state again the principles by which I have been guided. I said I would follow strictly the method of the critics, such as it has been described by Dr. Briggs in the following words:<sup>1</sup> 'The older interpreters, who did not understand the position of the Hebrew language in the development of the Shemitic family, . . . lived almost in another world. The modern Hebrew scholars are working in far more extended relations, and upon vastly deeper principles.' I believe I have not deviated from these principles. Studying the 'position' and nature of the Hebrew language, I have come to the conclusion that Hebrew was Jewish, the spoken dialect of Jerusalem, put in writing by the rabbis about the time of the Christian era. I have 'worked in more extended relations', I have consulted archaeology; the tablets of Tel el Amarna have shown me that the early books of the Hebrews must have been written in Babylonian cuneiform; the papyri of Elephantine that Aramaic had followed cuneiform; and Sir Arthur Evans's discoveries that the Canaanite script was of a foreign origin, having come from Crete and having been first used on the coast.

I believe I may say that these conclusions fulfil in a certain measure the learned divine's expectation: 'We should not be surprised at new and almost revolutionary results.' Some of these results are new, I have to thank for them the work of the excavators, and for many they will be revolutionary, because they challenge this idea which up to the present has been considered as undisputed and unassailable:

<sup>1</sup> Briggs, *loc. cit.*, p. 475.

That the books of the Old Testament are in the language used by their authors, and were written in the Old Hebrew script.

On the other hand, my hearers will bear witness that I have not departed from the text of Scripture. In reference to the composition and writing of the Law, I have only dealt with the two men who are spoken of in that respect, that is to say, Moses and Ezra. I have invented no Jahvist and Elohist authors, no school of juristic writers, no advisers of Zerubbabel encouraging him to rebel. I have endeavoured not to draw any inference which I could not base, either on documents brought to light in the great discoveries which are the foundations of my conclusions, or on a text of Scripture; and I have made a point always of insisting on the conjectural character of an idea for which I had not that kind of support. It seems to me that in such grave researches, touching such important subjects, what has first to be required from the writer is sincerity. I have always laid down as a rule to follow the lead of conscience, and this emboldens me to face the objections or attacks which I expect from the critics, and perhaps their contempt. I shall deem myself fortunate if these lectures have induced some of my hearers to look more closely into the Old Testament, and to appreciate more fully its magnificent construction and its majestic beauty.

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