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## Contributors and Correspondents

For the Presbyterian.

### ORIENTAL OCCUPATIONS.—THE FARMER.

BY REV. J. DUNBAR, DUNBARTON.

While older than I have been, still I am not yet beyond the range of vividly recollecting much to rejoice in, as well as not a little to regret, in connection with my earlier years. Among these regrets yet readily recalled, was the comparative lack of opportunity, common to many with myself in this country, and that period, of becoming acquainted with those habits and customs, implements and occupations of eastern nations so essentially necessary to the intelligent reading of many portions of God's holy word. In order, with others, to aid in remedying such a defect, still to a certain extent prevalent, I could wish, with your approval to write something on "oriental occupations," the better thereby to attract the young to the reading of the Bible, and especially to interest and benefit them in so doing, and it may be at the same time lessen the ignorance if not the indifference of some who may have long since laid aside all claim to belong to such a class.

The earliest occupation on record was the cultivation of the soil. The first father of our race was a gardener, and the first born of man "was a tiller of the ground," and it is also said of Noah the second father of mankind, that he "began to be a husbandman," while sires and sons in onward generations lived and died an agricultural people. The surface of the Holy Land, the long promised and at length possessed home of the chosen people of God, being diversified with hill and dale, lofty mountain and level plain, gave rise to a great variety alike of climate and soil. The soil comprehended all kinds, from that of the barren mountain side and the rocky ground where there was not much earth, to the good and fertile ground such as is seen in the vale of Jordan or the plains of Jericho, while the climate in the respective seasons of the year comprised all between the extremes of the snow-capped mountains in the north, to the intense heat of the southern vales. Generally speaking, however, the atmosphere is mild, the summers are commonly dry and often extremely hot. Very hot days however are frequently followed by very cold nights, verifying the words of the patriarch shepherd, that in the day the drought consumed him and the frost by night. During the period of the patriarchs very little is said in regard either to their implements or modes of agriculture, but when their descendants became possessed of the land of Canaan, a land already under cultivation, their knowledge would doubtless be not a little increased by adopting many of the practices already existing in the country. As agricultural operations varied with the season of the year, each kind will be noticed under its respective season, only premising that with the Jews the year was divided into six seasons, in keeping with the promise made to Noah that "while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter shall not cease," a division which it is said still exists among the Arabs to this day.

I. SEED-TIME.—This season began with the former or early rain, and included the two months from early in October to a corresponding period in December. Until these periodical rains begin to fall it would have been impossible as well as useless to attempt either to plough or sow. To us the plows and the plowing of ancient times would seem to be a mockery or matter of merriment. At first the ground was opened with pointed sticks, and thus they dibbled in the seed, then a kind of hoe was employed, while in wet soils the lighter animals such as sheep and goats were employed to tread in the seed with their feet. In Deuteronomy we have the first mention made of the plow, but merely its name, not its form. The first kind of plow was simply the crook or fork of a tree, the one limb cut short and pointed to scratch up the ground and the other cut long enough to fasten to the yoke of the animals drawing it, while the plowman kept this in the ground and guided it as best he could by another limb left long enough to lay hold of, or latterly by a handle attached thereto. As the plow had not only to be guided in the ground, but often pressed into the ground by the plowman, requiring the continued exercise at once of his strength and his skill, we see in this the fitness and the force of the figure of our Lord about "looking back." In course of time the point which stirred up the ground was shod with a piece of iron, and this so much resembled the short sword used by the ancient warriors, that it could be easily converted into that warlike weapon, hence the beating of

swords into plowshares as significant of peace, a statement all but meaningless when applied to our swords and plowshares. The plow was generally drawn by oxen, and their harness was simply either a yoke, or thongs attached to the head and horns. The Jews were forbidden to plow with an ox and an ass together. In Syria the plow is still sometimes drawn by one small cow, at most with two, and sometimes only by an ass. The animals at the plow were guided and urged on sometimes by a scourge or lash, but generally by a goad, a staff about eight feet long furnished at the one end with a flat piece of iron for cleaning the plow, and at the other with an iron spike for goading on the oxen. For the ox to kick against this sharp pointed goad was both foolish and hurtful, hence the allusion to kicking against the pricks or points of the goads. This instrument too, like the plowshare, was sometimes effectively turned into a weapon of warfare. The plowmen generally go in companies, partly from the love of gossip and partly for mutual protection, and as each day's plowing is sowed as it is plowed, one sower did for a whole company. It was in some such company as this that Elijah found Elisha "plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth," not as some suppose, with a team of twelve yoke of oxen, but twelve teams of one yoke each, and he with the twelfth.

The kinds of grain sown by the Jews were wheat and barley, cereals similar to our own; rye, which some are inclined to regard rather as spelt, an inferior kind of wheat; bread made from barley and rye was used by the poorer classes. Fitches, anise and cummin, were aromatic seeds used as condiments. They had neither hay, oats, peas, nor potatoes, and their tares resembled ours only in name, being a deleterious weed, which until it headed out, much resembled wheat, while the season of plowing and sowing depended not a little upon their periodical rains, yet in ordinary years the sowing took place about the end of October and onward in November, the wheat being sown first and the barley afterwards. Sowing is an operation which has been but little affected by the progress of invention, for the sower with his seed bag or basket on his left arm, and the seed therefrom sown "broadcast" with the right, is a picture common to all ages. It seems that no instrument resembling our harrow was then known, and how the seed sown was covered, if at all, is to us little better than conjecture, although some say it was covered by a cross furrow. The word rendered "harrow" in the book of Job means literally to break the clods, and it is thus rendered elsewhere. These clods were sometimes broken by hand with a hoe or hammer, and sometimes as in the above allusion by some kind of a log roller drawn by animal power. Illustrative allusions to sowing are not unfrequent in the scriptures. The Psalmist speaks of "sowing in tears," which may allude to seasons of great scarcity when the poor peasants part in sorrow with every handful of precious seed which they cast into the ground, for it is like taking the very bread out of their children's mouths, and in so doing many bitter tears are often shed. This statement often receives further illustration by scenes similar to those enacted in the days of Job when the Sabceans slew his servants with the edge of the sword and carried off his oxen and asses. As the peasants generally lived in villages or towns for mutual protection, their best grain growing fields were sometimes six or eight miles distant, and just so much nearer the lawless border of the desert, so than when the country is disturbed or the government weak they often could not sow their seed except at the risk of their lives. They therefore go forth to plow and sow in large companies completely armed and ready to drop the plow and seize their armor at a moment's warning. They thus sow in fear and anxiety and oft in tears, for amid all their care many and fatal calamities befall them. Another well known allusion is the parable of the sower, the full meaning of which is not always gotten. The farmers as already noticed lived mostly in villages; and they went forth to sow, not as with us to well fenced fields, but to the open country; where the road-way oft passed through the cultivated lands; where thorns grew in clumps all around; where the rocks peep out in places through the scanty soil, and where also were patches near by, more or less extensive and extremely fertile. A late traveller in passing through such a locality says, here we have the four conditions of the parable within a dozen rods of us, our horses are actually trampling down some seeds which have fallen by the way side, and larks and sparrows are busy picking them up, that man with his mattock is digging about places where the rock

is too near the surface for the plow, and much that is sown there will wither away because it has no deepness of earth, and not a few seeds have fallen among the thorns which will most assuredly choke their growth, yet so fertile is some of the good ground that the same writer says, "I have seen more than a hundred stalks springing from one root, and each with a head bowing gracefully beneath a load of full and well formed grain." Other allusions might have been presented, but when the mode is given, the meaning is easily gotten.

II. The next season is winter, which resembles ours in little but the name. In it the husbandman rests from his field work, and in regard to its scripture makes but little allusion either in regard to what it did or what was done in it. It includes the two months ending with the latter part of February, although house fires are needed, about four months in the year. Towards the end of November the trees begin to lose their foliage, and about the middle of December snow begins to fall, but except on the mountains it seldom lies over one day. Ice, too, in shady places will occasionally bear a person, but it is soon melted away by the sun.

III. The third season is simply called the cold season, not because it was colder than the winter that preceded it, but colder than the season that followed it. This is specially the spring season, and included the two months from the early part of February to the corresponding period in April. With the advent of the season the fields begin to appear green; as it progresses the trees put forth their foliage, and in due course blossom and flower manifest in their order their variegated beauty and fragrance. The heat gradually increases, and the sown fields soon begin to wave with promised abundance. Thunder and hail storms are more frequent than in winter; destructive to vegetation and not seldom fatal to both man and beast. Towards the end of the season the more or less frequent rains that gave beauty and strength to the maturing crops begin to cease, till in the latter part of April "the latter rain" falls, and the wheat and the barley have nearly attained to their full growth, and especially in the plains of Jericho the barley is well nigh ripe.

(Concluded next week.)

For the Presbyterian.

### MODERN BIBLICAL HYPER-CRITICISM.

BY REV. JOHN GRAY, M.A., ORKNEY.

No. I.

For years, numbers of ungodly scholars in Germany, loaded with prodigious stores of erudition, have been investigating the history and literature of the Holy Scriptures. Applying their unsanctified knowledge in an illogical and irreverent manner to the Sacred Records, they have adopted principles and arrived at conclusions, which sap the very foundations of truth.

There is, however, a freshness, conjoined with traces of originality, about their views; which render them attractive to many minds. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that these ponderous and learned authors have been studied and admired by many British and American ministers, that these works have been bespattered with praise, and numbers of them translated into English, as well as extensively circulated.

The circulation of such works has been largely aided by the wave of scepticism which is now passing over Christendom, and which specially relishes any spiny assaults upon the Holy Oracles, or any statements that seek to undermine the old orthodox faith.

Another circumstance which has tended to the wide diffusion of these heterodox writings is the change of views, throughout the church, in respect of the appointment of Professors in Colleges, leading to the choice of young and vigorous persons, without fully matured opinions, instead of aged veterans, thoroughly established in the faith.

Fanned by such propitious circumstances, these German theories and fancies regarding the divine word have effected a secure lodgment in many a manse and in not a few Theological Halls, and are not only exercising a baleful influence over many truth-loving minds, but are also undermining the faith of not a few, and gradually casting them adrift from the old standards of orthodoxy.

On the part of many, matters have reached this stage, that they are trying, in their longings after originality to find out, how far they can go in the direction of heterodoxy, and how far they can wander outside of the wholesome teachings of creeds and confessions without exposing

themselves to church discipline or expulsion. A conspicuous example of this class may be seen in professor W. R. Smith of Aberdeen.

In his now famous article on the Bible, in the 9th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* he confines himself to the following topic. "The present article," he writes, "seeks to give a general account of the historical and literary conditions under which the unique literature of the Old and New Testaments sprang up, and of the way in which the Biblical books were brought together in a canonical collection, and handed down from age to age.

In his treatment of this question, he gives a general and comprehensive sketch of the origin of the Old Testament canon, and then proceeds to divide its literature into historical, poetico-didactic, and prophetic.

In considering these three divisions, he evinces a hankering after strange views, and a tendency to depart from the old paths.

1. The effect of the perusal of his production is to unsettle our faith in the genuineness and authenticity of the Hebrew Scriptures, and to destroy our attachment to the inspired writings. It insinuates doubts, starts objections, and states opinions, the very antipodes of those usually held by the great body of Christians. It suggests questions like the following: Is the Old Testament the true and pure canon of revelation? Are the several books of the Bible complete and correct? Have not errors crept in, which the higher criticism of modern times has exposed. Is the Old Testament not after all an imperfect work, needing the improvements recommended by modern learning and criticism.

An essay, with so unhealthy a moral tone, and so destructive of what is faithful and true, in its instinctive teachings and tendencies, cannot but exert a prejudicial influence on the religious thought of the age.

2. It applies the principle of fictitious authorship to certain books and parts of the Bible.

When the church began to grow corrupt, parties wrote religious works, and, to give them greater authority, palmed them off as the productions of Apostles, like Paul, or apostolic men like Ignatius.

The same thing Professor Smith affirms has been done in connection with some of the sacred books.

"Now the Book of Deuteronomy presents a quite distinct type of style, and suggests the idea that the Deuteronomic hand is the hand of the last editor of the whole history from Genesis to Kings, or at least of the non-Levitical parts thereof. Again, it is difficult to suppose that the legislative part of Deuteronomy is as old as Moses."

"Beyond doubt the book is, as already hinted, a prophetic legislative programme, and if the author put his work in the mouth of Moses instead of giving it, with Ezekiel, a directly prophetic form, he did so, not in pious fraud, but simply because his object was not to give a new law, but to expound and develop Mosaic principles in relation to new deeds. And as ancient writers are not accustomed to distinguish historical data from historical deductions, he naturally presents his views in dramatic form in the mouth of Moses." He next states that "the Deuteronomic legislation is not earlier than the prophetic period of the eighth and seventh centuries (before Christ)."

"In like manner, the Book of Job may be plausibly referred to the seventh century B.C." And even poor Job is denied any other existence than the fictitious hero of a novel. "In the Book of Job," says the learned professor, "we find poetical invention of incidents attached for didactic purposes to a name apparently derived from old tradition." So Job's patience is but a Christian grace, annexed to an old traditional name, and his daughter and existence but a shadow and a fiction.

And what will our children say to the extinction of Jonah and his great fish, and the turning of his exciting story into a traditional legend.

Speaking of Job there occurs the following language. "There is no valid *a priori* reason for denying that the Old Testament may contain other examples of the same sort. The Book of Jonah is generally viewed as a case in point."

Gallantry alone might have restrained the writer from laying sacrilegious hands on that noble Jewish lady, Esther. But it is said of her, that she too has been viewed as a fiction by many who are not over sceptical critics." And as if to add insult to injury, he not only ignores the Jewish Queen's real existence, but actually rules the book itself out of the canon, and places it in the apocrypha, on evidence that any ordinary student of Biblical literature

knows to be false. "A book, which finds no recognition in the New Testament and whose canonicity was long suspected by the Christian as well as by the Jewish Church, must sink to the rank of an apocryphal production."

And we need not wonder to find, after such marvellous discoveries and conclusions, on the part of the professorial luminaries of the Free Church College at Aberdeen, that Solomon had very little to do with his well known Proverbs, and had no connection at all with Ecclesiastes. In regard to the former work, he delivers this judgment: "In truth, the several sections of the book are varied enough in color, to make it plain, that we have before us the essence of the wisdom of centuries, while the introductory address in chapters I.-ix. shows how a later age learned to develop the gnomic style, so as to fit it for longer compositions."

Of the latter book, he speaks thus:—"The fundamental type of Hebrew philosophy remains, however, unchanged, even in the book of Ecclesiastes, which bears every mark of a very late date, long after the exile."

For the present, we must close this article, and reserve our further extracts and remarks for a future occasion.

For the Presbyterian.

REV. CHAS. H. PAYSON.

BY REV. DAVID MITCHELL, TORONTO.

The Bond Street Congregational Church of this city recently extended a call to the above named gentleman to their vacant pulpit. It gave us much pleasure at the time to think that there was thus a prospect of a minister being brought from the rank and file of the New York clergy, as a sort of *quid pro quo* for taking from our midst a man so greatly beloved as the Rev. F. H. Marling. At the same time, knowing Mr. Payson well, and being familiar with the peculiarly pressing nature of his work, it seemed hardly probable that any inducement could remove him from New York. But little did we think that the Lord was then about to give our brother a call to the higher service in heaven. Thus however it has proved. Mr. Payson entered upon the present year in the very best of health and spirits, with every prospect of giving himself more and more to the Master's cause, and also of spending many years in the service he so much loved. As usual he entered upon the week of prayer with genuine delight and expectancy. He had nightly meetings in his Church. In consequence, he caught cold, which developed in pneumonia, and after a short illness he succumbed to the dangerous disease. Thus we now know one of the reasons why he was not permitted by the Master to accept the call to labour in Toronto. His work was done. What the Lord had given him to do he had thoroughly accomplished. And so this good and faithful servant was called to his reward.

Mr. Payson lived much, though not long. In infancy he was dedicated to the ministry. His youth and early manhood were devoted to preparation for his life work. In 1860 when bordering upon thirty years of age, he entered upon his duties as missionary minister in a portion of New York densely filled by the working-classes, especially of the German nationality. His work grew upon him day by day. He gathered the poor from a large area, and gradually moulded them into a flourishing congregation. It is probable he has been the means of converting hundreds if not thousands of drunken and depraved persons; while the liberal measures he introduced for reaching the German population, and especially their children, proved he was possessed of statesman-like ability. The congregation of Mr. Payson, when we were associated with him in the Presbytery of New York, had increased to a membership of 700. A few years ago they built a handsome and capacious structure to meet the varied wants of the people and district. In this place ever since a grand and noble work has been going on. The Madison Square Church Mission was like a lighthouse in the midst of the darkness. The work will go on, and God will raise up a worthy successor, though we could not name one in all our circle of friends who is qualified for carrying on the vast undertaking which grew and developed under the ministrations of Mr. Payson.

Such an early death we feel to be a warning to ministers in middle life, and to all who knew the subject of this notice, as well as to those whose eyes may fall upon these lines. "He being dead yet speaketh."

We are happy in being able to announce a letter from Rev. J. Fraser Campbell, M.A., for next issue. It is dated Madras, 13th January.