

stout denials of the native writers, there are no positive evidences that these are more than national peculiarities, inheritances from the old Semitic family of peoples, as it is well known that some of these—such as the Sabbath observance—was found also among non-Jewish Semites—*e.g.*, the Babylonians.

The precise period of the introduction of Christianity into Abyssinia has also exerted a decisive influence on them and their history. It was the first century after Christianity had become the accepted religion of the empire, the age of controversies on theological and christological subjects. It was not yet the period when a highly developed culture and civilization went hand in hand with the new faith, when grand churches and basilicas were built, and when literature, the sciences, and the arts had adjusted themselves to the new state of affairs and had thrown off allegiance to the Greek and Roman ideals and had become imbued with the new spirit. Before that formative era of controversy was over Abyssinia had already severed its connection with the Greek Church and the Greek world of thought. The Synod of Chalcedon, in 451, condemned the monophysitic doctrines of the Egyptian churches, and with this act the Christian churches of that country and of Abyssinia withdrew from the Church at large. About two centuries later Mohammedanism conquered Egypt, and thus separated the Abyssinian people externally also from all the other nations with whom they had been in any connection or spiritual union.

These facts explain much that is seemingly enigmatical in the history and character of the Abyssinian Church. First, the self-imposed and then the enforced isolation of the peoples on account of that very thing which entered most largely into their national development, namely, their religion, naturally made them all the more zealous in preserving at least the outward forms of their historic worship and Christianity. The conservatism, naturally so deeply implanted in the Semitic peoples, proved a most effective assistant and agent for the process of spiritual petrification. Accordingly, we have in the Abyssinians of to-day virtually a petrified Greek Christianity of the fourth and the fifth centuries. The outward forms, liturgies, dogmas, and ceremonies have been handed down from century to century uninfluenced by the development that has been going on in the civilized world and in the Church elsewhere during all these long years. The spiritual element in the religion of the Abyssinian Church is gone; it is now mere formalism. The hull and shell of Christianity is certainly there; the kernel, the life has departed.

These facts furnish us with the data intelligently to judge of the mission problem and prospects presented by this unique people and Church. Naturally the former is not an easy one. The work to be done is to introduce into the forms of Christianity obtaining in Abyssinia the real spiritual life of the Gospel. Protestant mission societies have felt this to be the case, and have labored in this direction as much as they could, but against terrible odds. Again and again have they been driven from the