

to have descended. The selection is made for convenience, because this audience is assumed to be familiar with the Old Testament, so that quotations and citations from it are less necessary; and also because many of them in this, the Anthropologic Section, are familiar with the Indians, so that the collocation of facts without a prolix statement is sufficient for comparison.

Although the Indians are divided into fifty-eight linguistic stocks and three hundred languages, and although there is great variety in their manners, customs, and traditions, yet there is sufficient generic resemblance between all of them to afford typical instances, where European civilization and missionary influence have not effected serious change, or where the early authorities are reliable. It is essential to examine the other side of the parallel—the Israelites—at a period coincident in development with that of the Indians. That part of the history and records of the Israelites must be chiefly considered which relates to the times before they had formed a nationality and had become sedentary. The general use of writing was nearly contemporaneous with that nationality, and the era of King David is a proper demarkating line. The Indians never having arrived at the stage of nationality, though some of them (as the Iroquois and the Muskoki) were far on the road to it, and never having acquired a written language, their stage of culture at the Columbian discovery shows a degree of development comparable with that of the Israelite patriarchal period and the early Canaanite occupation before the rule of kings.

It is important to establish the time when writing was first known among the Israelites, because then their traditions would first become fixed. No reliable history can exist before writing. An illiterate people remembers only fables and myths; from these the history of the years before writing was used must be winnowed. There is no reason to suppose that the Hebrew language was written at the time of the exodus, though some such mnemonic system might have been invented as was used by several of the Indian tribes. If Moses had all the knowledge of the Egyptians, but no more, he could not have used any better mode of writing than their hieratic, in which it was not possible to write intelligibly any long document in the Hebrew language, simply because the advance made by the hieratic, in which the use of phonetics began, was not sufficient to express all the Hebrew vocables.

There has been an attempt to show that the old Hebrew alphabet, which has been classed as partly Phœnician and partly Babylonian, was obtained from Assyria at a time before the exodus, but the proposition is not yet established. Even if Assyrian characters adaptable to the Hebrew language did then exist, it is not probable that the Israelite herdsmen and bondmen did so