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The Contribution of the United States of America to Old Testament Scholarship.

BY PROFESSOR J. M. POWIS SMITH, THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO.

It should not surprise any one to learn that the contribution of the United States to learning and to literature was rather slow in beginning. The first century in the new country was taken up with the elemental struggle for existence. Indians had to be fought, the prairies had to be broken, *i.e.* converted from grassland into ploughed land, houses had to be built, fences had to be erected, schools and colleges had to be established, railways and telegraph lines had to be laid out and constructed, rivers had to be bridged, roads had to be made, and state and national governments had to be organized and maintained. In a word, the foundations of a civilization had to be laid. Not only so, but three great wars had to be fought. Little wonder that with all this going on there was little time for scholarly or artistic work.

Naturally, therefore, the history of Old Testament scholarship on this side of the water is not very long. The first work of significance was that of Charles A. Briggs, entitled *Biblical Study* (1884); this was published in a new and enlarged edition in 1899. It was followed by his *Messianic Prophecy* (1886). These were not revolutionary works, and displayed little sense of a genuinely historical attitude, but they opened the way for the work of other scholars. Professor Briggs' most valuable work was in a series of articles published in *Hebraica*, vol. iii. (1886), in which he did creative work on the structure of Hebrew poetry. He also rendered useful service as editor, with Francis Brown and S. R. Driver, of the *Hebrew Lexicon of the Old Testament* (finished in 1906), which has been of invaluable assistance to all students of Hebrew. Besides this, he shared with S. R. Driver the Old Testament editorship of the 'International Critical Commentary,' not yet finished. Under the leadership of C. A. Briggs and Francis Brown, Union Theological Seminary in New York City took position as one of the leading institutions representing the modern historical point of view in Biblical Criticism. The 'International Critical Commentary' has enlisted the service of the leading English-speaking scholars and is regarded as on the whole the most authoritative work of its nature in English upon the Old Testament. Of the seventeen volumes on the Old Testament so far issued, twelve have been pre-

pared by American scholars, *viz.* *Judges*, by George F. Moore (1895); *Samuel*, by H. P. Smith (1899); *Proverbs*, by C. H. Toy (1899); *Amos and Hosea*, by W. R. Harper (1905); *Psalms*, by Charles A. Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs (1906); *Ecclesiastes*, by George A. Barton (1908); *Esther*, by L. B. Paton (1908); *Chronicles*, by E. L. Curtis and A. A. Madsen (1910); *Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, and Joel*, by J. M. Powis Smith, W. H. Ward, and Julius A. Bewer (1912); *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah* by H. G. Mitchell, J. M. Powis Smith, and J. A. Bewer (1912); *Ezra-Nehemiah*, by L. W. Batten (1913); and *Daniel*, by J. A. Montgomery (1927). These men were all professors in universities or theological seminaries, and represent all the leading schools of the country, thus showing that the historical method of Biblical study has won its way throughout the country. Not that there are not movements of opposition to progress here as elsewhere, but such movements are doomed to failure, and already show signs of their weakness.

One of the most active and effective exponents of the modern point of view in Biblical study was my own great teacher, President William Rainey Harper, of the University of Chicago. He was a most inspiring teacher and a great organizer. He awakened a new interest in Old Testament study all over the country. He introduced a new method for the teaching of Hebrew, *viz.* the Inductive Method, and established summer schools of Hebrew at Chautauqua and many other centres. He founded the popular journal known as *The Biblical World*, which continued to represent sound Biblical views and to keep alive an interest in the subject until it passed out of existence in 1920. He also established a technical journal, first published in 1884, and called *Hebraica*, and later changed to *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, under which title it still exists, being now in its forty-fifth volume. He likewise founded a Department of Semitic Languages and Literatures in the University of Chicago, which at once took leading rank in American Old Testament scholarship. Under its present Chairman, Professor James Henry Breasted, it has expanded into a larger organization, known as the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago,

which is conducting excavations and research in the Orient in connexion with six expeditions. From these operations much advantage should accrue to Old Testament scholarship.

Other names that have bulked large in American Old Testament scholarship should be mentioned. Among these belongs the name of Professor George Foot Moore of Harvard University, who has been a leading light for decades. He rendered yeoman service to Old Testament studies in early days by his commentary on Judges and by numerous articles. In later years he has been working more in the history of religions, especially Judaism. Alongside of him should be named the late Professor Paul Haupt of Johns Hopkins University, whose Polychrome Bible brought modern criticism vividly to the mind of both critic and layman through its gaily coloured English and Hebrew volumes. Another of that same generation was Professor Crawford Howell Toy, also of Harvard University, whose careful scholarship and open mind commended him to scholars and pupils alike. His *Proverbs* is still a standard work upon that book, and his article on 'Ecclesiastes,' which I have recently had the privilege of revising, is included in the fourteenth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Along with these belongs also the name of the late Henry Preserved Smith of Union Theological Seminary, New York. He has left for the edification of his successors a volume on *The Religion of Israel* (1914), and another on *Old Testament History* (1903), both of which are standard works, though now in need of revision. Besides these, there was recently published the story¹ of the attack made upon him when he was professor in Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati, for the purpose of removing him from his chair because of his modern views. We of the present day owe a great debt to men like Briggs and H. P. Smith, who fought bravely for the principles so vital to them, thus easing the path for us who follow.

No list of Old Testament scholars would be complete without the name of C. C. Torrey, of Yale University. His work would be classified as radical, since in dealing with Ezra, Nehemiah, and Deutero-Isaiah, he seeks the overthrow of generally accepted positions, making this literature much later than other scholars do. But even if his views do not stand, such work is valuable in that it stirs scholars in general to a fresh examination of their conclusions and frequently leads to some modification of accepted results.

¹ H. P. Smith, *The Heretic's Defense: A Footnote to History* (1926).

Jewish Old Testament scholarship is well represented by three names, those of the late Morris Jastrow, Junr., of President Julian Morgenstern of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, and of Professor Moses Bittenwieser, of the same institution. Jastrow wrote useful commentaries on Job and Ecclesiastes. Morgenstern is working on the problem of Pentateuchal Criticism, articles upon which by him frequently appear; and Bittenwieser has done good work on the Prophets and on Job.

One special study now in progress should be mentioned, viz. the Peshitto project being carried on by Professors Martin Sprengling and William C. Graham of the University of Chicago. Its ultimate aim is to establish a sound text of the Peshitto, or Syriac translation of the Old Testament. At present, the Syriac commentaries on the Old Testament by Bar Hebraeus and Bar Salibi are being translated for the purpose of establishing the Syriac text upon which their commentaries were based. The first volume of this work is nearly ready for the press. The work is being financed by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. This undertaking should be a great contribution toward the establishment of a critically based standard Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

Meantime, mention may be made of the *American Translation of the Old Testament*, published by the University of Chicago Press, and made under the editorship of J. M. Powis Smith by four translators, viz. Professors T. J. Meek, A. R. Gordon, L. W. Waterman, and J. M. Powis Smith. It is to be hoped that this may, at least, make some contribution toward the better translation that the future has in store.

American Old Testament scholars also made a considerable contribution toward the preparation of Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*. To that work about sixty articles were contributed by Americans, not counting minor articles. Likewise the American Society of Biblical Literature publishes a journal, now in its forty-eighth volume, which for nearly half a century has afforded Old Testament scholars an opportunity to get their results before the reading world. The maintenance of the American School for Oriental Research in Jerusalem, Palestine, must also be credited to the account of American Biblical scholars. This school serves as a centre for young scholars from which they can become acquainted with the geography of Palestine, study questions of identification of localities, gain some feeling for Semitic psychology, realize the economic limitations of life in Palestine, and so become more capable of

understanding and interpreting the Biblical literature.

In summing up the value of the American contribution to Old Testament scholarship, it may be confidently said that America has brought to Old Testament studies a spirit of enthusiasm and an attitude of freedom that have been of great value. In this new land, tradition has lost some of its power. We have, therefore, been able to look at Biblical problems with free and unfettered minds, thus seeing more clearly and deeply than would

otherwise have been possible. From that point of view, the future is encouraging. The advocates of tradition are not yet by any means silent; but the modern historical point of view is established in practically all the schools of higher learning, and is fast gaining the confidence of the educated public. Hence we can look forward with confidence to a free field wherein we shall have liberty to interpret the Word of God in accordance with the dictates of reason and intelligence and under the guidance of a free conscience.

In the Study.

Virginitus Puerisque.

Seals.

BY THE REVEREND E. A. PAYNE, B.A., B.D.,
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'The seal of mine apostleship are ye.'—1 Co 9².

NOT long ago, as you will all know, there was a change of Government in this country. Those who had been in charge of affairs for the last five years resigned, and others took their places. According to the newspapers, one day early in June all the members of the old Cabinet went in their best suits and top hats, and by special train, to see the King at Windsor, and they gave up to him the seals of their various offices. Then a day or so later all who were to be members of the new Cabinet, in their best clothes (there was one lady, so they had not all top hats this time) and again by special train, went down to Windsor and received the seals from His Majesty. Until they had the seals, they were not really the King's Ministers. The old seals are the sign of authority. They show that the members of the Cabinet have power from the King to act on his behalf. Orders which bear the mark of these seals must be obeyed.

Seals are among the oldest things in the world. Sometimes they have been big and elaborate, sometimes quite small and very finely wrought. Sometimes men have worn them hung round the neck by a cord, sometimes as a ring on the finger. Centuries ago in Babylon official documents were sealed with a marked cylinder. The Egyptians used little models of beetles. Most museums in this country have collections of old seals of all shapes and sizes. Everywhere they have been used to give authority to those who possessed them,

and to prove that papers marked with them are really genuine.

There is a story about a seal in the Old Testament. King Ahab wanted a vineyard which was near his palace, but Naboth, the owner, would not part with it because it was a family possession and had belonged to his father and his grandfather before him. Unfortunately, the wicked queen Jezebel discovered the King's wish, and so she planned to get Naboth out of the way. She sent letters in the King's name ordering Naboth to be stoned, and the letters were obeyed, because she had stolen the King's seal to put on them, and when people saw the seal they were sure this cruel deed must have been ordered by Ahab and must be carried out. Since the seal was there all right no one questioned that the letters were genuine.

There is something about seals in the New Testament also. The Apostle Paul writing to the Christians in Corinth says that they are the seals set upon his preaching; they show that he really has authority from God; they are the sign that he is a true apostle; they are the proof of the power of the gospel. When those in Corinth saw the changed lives of Paul's friends, then they could be sure that he had the right to speak about Jesus Christ. When the other Apostles heard of these Corinthian Christians, they had to recognize Paul as properly accredited. You can be seals in that sense. If you live truthful, clean, and helpful lives, then the boys and girls you meet at school will know that there is real power and authority in the gospel which you hear at Sunday School and in Church. They will attend to the message of Jesus Christ because they will see that it has its seals attached to it all right.