

ARTICLE II.

THE FAVORABLE REFERENCES TO THE FOREIGN ELEMENT IN THE HEBREW HISTORY.

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It entered into the plan of God concerning the Jews that they should be an exclusive people. Strict ceremonial requisitions cut them off from close communication with other nations. The sons and daughters of the chosen race were not to form marriages with the idolaters of the surrounding lands. The exterminating policy with reference to several tribes in their neighborhood was the avowed policy. Frequent and deadly wars, hand to hand and knife to knife, must have tended to make the feeling of Hebrew nationality bitter. Perhaps the position of the Hebrews as to other races was not greatly unlike that which the white people of Arizona hold toward the vile and cruel Apaches. All the tribes around them were of a gross and licentious religion, and in the weakness of Israel nothing but the wall of a jealous nationality, with high towers of prejudice, could keep the nation even respectably separate from the world.

But over against this dominant exclusiveness of the Hebrew people some facts are recorded in the Biblical narratives which awaken surprise and pleasure.

If at any point it should seem that the national exclusiveness would be outright and strong and punctilious, that point is the genealogy of the royal and Messianic family. If we look carefully through the names we shall find those of four, and only four, women. Tamar, the first, was a woman of no great self-respect, but she is supposed to have been a Canaanite also. Rahab, the second, could not have held a very high moral position among her own people, but her own people were the devoted heathen of Jericho. We may dislike to mention the third name, Ruth, quite so closely

after the two already written ; she was cast in finer mould ; no suspicion of guilt or impurity sullies her reputation. But she, like the others, was not an Israelite, but a Moabitess, a daughter of the children of Lot. The fourth name is Bathsheba, beautiful indeed, and of pure Hebrew lineage, but the wife of a Hittite. Thus the only women mentioned in this sacred genealogy are all either foreigners or intimately associated with foreigners.

The incidents connected with these women's lives are not suppressed on the holy pages. We might expect that the literary men, the scribes of an exclusive people, would obscure the incidents. On the contrary, the incidents are made noticeably conspicuous. In the case of one of these women, the whole of a book of scripture is devoted to her life. The sacred writer would seem to take pleasure in setting forth the picture of the fair, affectionate, and dutiful damsel of Moab, who, in her honorable poverty, gleaned in the fields of Boaz. His pen is not unwilling ; his Hebrew pride does not protest. We read in the book of the Law : " A Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord : even to his tenth generation he shall not enter." The sixtieth Psalm says, in a tone of high contempt, " Moab is my wash-pot." The prophets give vent to denunciation of the ancient enemy who would not give bread or water to his fugitive kinsmen when they came up out of Egypt, and who hired Balaam to curse them. Yet, embedded in the same volume of the national records, we find this most pleasing, and withal admiring, memorial of a Moabitess, who became a mother in Israel. So does the philanthropic spirit of the Bible break through the high towers of prejudice, and, even in the earliest dates, anticipate the breadth and charity of the completed revelation.

In contrast, moreover, with the general conduct attributed to the Jews themselves while in the desert, in contrast even with such a personage as Aaron, one is pleased with the picture, half-drawn, of Hobab. He comes into the camp of the wanderers. His salutation and blessing are graceful and hearty. His word of cheer reads like a song. His

practised eye sees how heavily the weight of cares falls on Moses's shoulders. He suggests a system of administration which distributes the burden. When he rises to decamp, the earnest and tender importunity on Moses's part reveals that great leader's appreciation of his success. Yet this man, who humanly speaking saved Moses from wearing out, was one of that race which afterward enticed the people into idolatry, against which the zeal of Phineas burned white, and which, in times still subsequent, overran Palestine like locusts. Hobab was a Midianite; Moses's wife was a Midianite; that great branch of the Levitical family carried down the blood of these Arabs in its veins.

The writer of the Book of the Judges gives us the song of Deborah and Barak, on the occasion of the great victory over Sisera. That song reserves its crown of praise for the head of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite: "Blessed above women shall she be" — the original being here given of those sacred words afterward to be adapted to the blessed Virgin. But Jael belonged not to a Jewish, but to a Kenite family. She was, it is likely, of the race of Midian. Still the song falters not in its glowing admiration. It shows no stinginess of prejudice. It hands down the glorious deed of this foreign woman with no reluctance. It might fitly be added, just here, that the unstinted and high compliment which is paid to Jehonadab, the son of Rechab (Jer. xxxv. 6, 7), was bestowed upon one of the descendants of this same family.

The brave six hundred who followed the fair shepherd of Bethlehem into the wilderness of Judea, were refugees from various people. Curious investigations concerning the Cherethites and Pelethites, David's body-guard, suggest that some of these were from the island of Crete. Concerning one of these foreign soldiers a notable incident is recorded. It occurred on the memorable day on which the king was obliged to leave Jerusalem, which he had builded, to the power and lust of Absalom. The hearts of his own tribe were alienated from him, but these foreigners forsook him not. As the guard presented themselves to follow the falling

fortunes of David, he is said to have singled out one of them in particular, saying: "Why goest thou with us? return to thy place, stay with the king (i.e. Absalom); for thou art a stranger and an exile: should I make thee to wander up and down with us? return thou and take back thy brethren." The soldier and chief, thus warmly addressed, made this soldierly answer: "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there will thy servant be." Noble answer, come from whom it may. But it came from a countryman of Goliath, from a native of Gath. Did no small hate of the Philistine name keep back this incident, this noble act of devotion paid on that day to the monarch of Israel? This Gittite, at the battle of Mahanaim, in which poor Absalom died, held command in apparent and fit equality with Joab and Abishai.

But this noble answer of Ittai the Gittite is more than matched by the austere and, as it proved, sorrowful fidelity of Uriah, the Hittite. Casual readers think of Uriah as only a common soldier. But of the thirty persons enumerated as the valiant ones of David's reign, this Hittite was one. His sense of military duty was acutely, even severely fine. For, after David's great crime, he sent for Uriah to come home; calling him even away from the desperate warfare before the wall of Rabboth-Ammon, on the other side of the Jordan. The guilty sovereign hoped the soldier would go right home to his own house and wife, and thus his adulterous act be covered. But the stern man from the camp, much as he loved his ewe lamb, all unconscious of the wrong done to him by his prince — would not allow himself to go to his house. He slept at the door of the king's house with the servants. On being asked by David why he went not home, he made that answer which Cromwell — it has been noted by Dean Stanley — applied to his son Richard. "The ark and Israel and Judah abide in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I, then, go into my house? As thou livest, and as thy

soul liveth, I will not do this thing." The king then went so far as to make his faithful servant drunk at his royal table. But Uriah forgot not himself, even in his wine, but slept, as before, at the king's gate. Then it was that David sent back the brave, stern, faithful soldier, with orders to Joab to put him — where he knew that Uriah's courage and honor would not fail to go — in the fore-front of the hottest battle. There the chieftain fell; and, though he was a son of the children of Heth — a pure Canaanite — the Jewish historian has not shrunk from giving this foreigner a name of honor on the sacred page.

All the Hebrew pride, at least in later days, centered on Mount Moriah and the Temple of Solomon there. That pride would not be greatly gratified, it would seem, by making prominent the fact that the place on which that glorious Temple was built had been used formerly as a Jebusite's threshing-floor. Yet the little glimpse we get of Ornan, as with princely courtesy and generosity he offered the goodly site, the threshing-floor for the altar, the oxen for the sacrifice, the instruments of the oxen for wood, gives us pleasing impressions concerning the alien tribe which held so long the strong fortress of Jerusalem. When the Temple came to be built, also, we read of the architect who was employed upon the edifice, that "he was skilful to work in gold and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber; in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also, to grave any manner of graving which shall be put to him." Such were the splendid qualifications of this man. If the magnificent house showed forth the glory of Solomon and of the Hebrew nation, it showed no less the cunning, elaborate, and marvellous designs and workmanship of "Father Hiram." But Hiram's father was a Tyrian, and he himself was "fetched out of Tyre."

Such are illustrations of the appreciative way in which the scriptures of the exclusive nation refer to the persons and deeds of foreigners. This appreciation came to its breadth of liberality in the manner and speech of him in whose veins,

according to the flesh, flowed the blood of Tamar, of Rahab, and of Ruth, as well as of Abraham and David.

In our Lord's day this exclusiveness had become intense and bitter — the one thing left of the national religion. The Jews were then fiercely proud of descent from Abraham. If they were outwardly obsequious to the Roman, it was because that iron yoke ground them in the dust. Their souls hated it and the Roman also. Whether at home, or scattered abroad in the Greek and Roman cities, they felt toward other nations as the Irish feel toward England. They were ripe for uprisings, seditions, and vain wars of independence. They had no dealings with the Samaritans. The purists at the capital had some contempt for those of their own nation, as the Galileans, who lived on the borders of the Gentiles.

It became our Lord Jesus to be a Jew; to fulfil all the peculiar righteousness of the race to which he belonged; to begin his own work, and to charge upon his disciples to begin theirs, among the Jews; to maintain that "salvation is of the Jews." He came, in this respect, as in every other, "not to destroy, but to fulfil." But in fulfilling the spirit of the old dispensation with reference to foreigners, his words and deeds stand out in genial and startling contrast with the narrow and bitter Judaism of his age.

How beautiful is the character of that centurion made to appear, on the page of the evangelist, who, referring to his own official manner toward his servants, said to Jesus: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof. Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Beautiful, too, was the mingled surprise and delight with which this King of the Jews turned, and said: "Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Yet this man, though he had built a synagogue, and was a lover of the Hebrew nation, was a Roman.

Still more remarkable was the quality of character brought out in the familiar narrative of the Syro-Phenician woman who pressed the Jewish Messiah so strongly in behalf of her

daughter. Her answers to the testing questions which were put to her exhibit passionateness of feeling, brightness of repartee, wonderfully tempered with humility and trustfulness. The Master admired the woman whom his disciples would have sent away with impatient contempt. He could call them, even at a much later day, "fools and slow of heart"; but to this heathen he was constrained to say: "O woman, great is thy faith! be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

We get, likewise, from that noteworthy interview at Jacob's well, favorable impressions of that specially despised class of foreigners, the Samaritans. Even the woman of Samaria herself, though her life is revealed as suspicious, is not, at least, repulsive to the reader. But when we blend with this scene that parable which is familiarly known by the name "the Good Samaritan," we are amazed at the favorable picture which Jesus deliberately drew of a man belonging to this alien nation. The scene is on the steep, wild road to Jericho. The object of sympathy is a man who has fallen among thieves, who lies, stripped and half-dead, by the roadside. One traveller saw him, and crossed over to the other side. He was a Jew, and a priest, too. Another came up, even went and looked at the man, but passed by on the other side. He is one of our countrymen, too, and a Levite. Who is the man who not only went to the unfortunate sufferer, but had compassion on him, and bound up his wounds, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him? The answer was a bold one: He was a foreigner — one with whom you have no dealings. The flesh he touches is as swine's flesh to you. You would not allow him to become a proselyte even. He belongs to that detested people concerning whom one of your later writers has spoken as follows: "There be two manners of nations which my heart abhorreth, and the third is no nation — they that sit in the mountains of Samaria, and they that dwell among the Philistines, and that foolish people that dwell in Sichem." The man in the parable, whom you must admire, was of this abhorred and foolish people.

Such is the appreciation of the foreigner which breathes in the teaching of him who came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is the undertone which has been whispering through the whole scripture, even though its sound be almost lost at times in the louder wrath against sin, and especially against idolatry; or its whisper be kept purposely back because of the hardness of the people with whom it was necessary that this rough experiment of the world's education should commence. It found utterance in the law itself. For there we find that statute, which reads as if it came warm from the legislator's heart: "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." "The Lord your God loveth the stranger, giving him food and raiment. Love ye, therefore, the stranger, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." This spirit kindled in the glorious visions of the prophets.

But it was reserved for the apostles — pre-eminently for Paul of Tarsus, himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews — to gather all the rays of light in the ancient scripture, and that shone around them from the glorified person and work of Christ, into their burning-glass, and so proclaim to the nations, with the heat of the Christian charity, that "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God," wherein "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."

To some it may seem strange and circuitous to bring from the Jewish scriptures any pictures which should give lessons to Christians of the nineteenth century with respect to their attitude toward the nations of foreign countries. But, unless we have overrated the interest of the topic which has engaged our attention, those lessons are fresh, weighty, and encouraging.

The tendency to sweeping judgments of classes and races is here effectively rebuked. We may not, indeed, ignore

than their own. We have lived to see these poor views pass away in no small measure. But they still linger with more power than we suspect. They still greatly fetter the effort, because they so narrow the confidence, of our churches. It is needful to cultivate the generous faith, hope, and charity which belong to our religion, with respect to all races of the world. God is marvellously throwing these races together. It is not for any intelligent citizen or Christian or church to cherish the opinion that there is any one peculiar country in which Christian piety or true church order is to prevail, any peculiar race which can be supposed to form free institutions and manage free churches. Even into the Jewish nation and church were incorporated the Moabite, Midianite, Hittite, Philistine, Phenician, Roman, and Samaritan. The fairest graces and virtues grew in their beauty on those stalks. We are not worthy of the Hebrew and Christian history which we inherit unless we expect to gather all classes — Irish, German, Scandinavian, African, and Chinese — into our American churches; unless we expect them to adopt the American school and the American Sabbath; unless we expect them to be as excellent champions of our Puritan Christianity as many of them have already been champions of our American liberty in the Senate and on the battle-field. With this broader conception of what we may expect from foreigners, and of what they may properly expect from us, it is obvious that the home and foreign work of our churches takes on at the same time a vast accession of both undertaking and encouragement.