

*RECENT OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE IN
THE UNITED STATES.*

HEBREW GRAMMARS.—Two important works on Hebrew grammar have appeared from leading Old Testament scholars, one by Dr. Green, of Princeton, the other by Dr. Harper, of Yale.

The work¹ by Dr. Green is a new edition of his grammar published twenty-seven years ago, with which American and English scholars are well acquainted. While it bears marks of careful revision throughout, the syntax has been recast, and has been enlarged from forty-seven pages in the old edition to one hundred and twenty-seven in the new. Dr. Green's grammar is the most complete treatise that we possess on the Hebrew language in English, and it does not suffer in comparison with the best Hebrew grammars in German. Taking into account its exhaustive indices, it possesses incomparable advantages over mere translations of German Hebrew grammars.

The most serious blemish in this treatise, as we think, is the retention of the old terminology, preterite and future, not because it is old, but because it seems to be pretty well established that the Hebrew verb does not exhibit distinctions of time, but rather of action or state, as complete or incomplete. Indeed this distinction seems to be characteristic of all Semitic languages. Even the Assyrian, as Sayce has shown, in its original character, does not furnish an exception. Nevertheless no English or American Old Testament scholar who cannot use German readily, and who wishes to secure a mastery of the language, can afford to be without this grammar.

Dr. Harper has done more, we think, to popularize the study of Hebrew than any man who has ever lived. The great revival of interest in Hebrew learning in America is largely due to this Hebrew evangelist. He has instructed hundreds, if not thousands, by correspondence, and in the Hebrew summer schools, of which he is the inspiration. Possessed of unusual enthusiasm, and executive ability, and of an iron industry, he has thrown his whole being into the promotion of Semitic studies.

¹ *A Grammar of the Hebrew Language.* New Edition, carefully Revised throughout and the Syntax greatly Enlarged. (John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1888.)

We have reason then to be interested in all his books, as instruments already tested by one of the most successful teachers who has ever appeared in the New World.

All his text-books, of which he has now published three, are arranged on the inductive method. The first takes the student by the hand, pointing out the facts of the Hebrew language, and then gradually constructs his system. His *Elements of Hebrew Syntax*,¹ is arranged on the same plan. He does not claim originality of scholarship, but simply a practical adaptation of means to an end. His method may be illustrated by the first paragraph under the noun, which is entitled "The Noun, used Collectively." Under this heading he gives fifteen Hebrew words, with their meanings and references to the passages where they occur, under four classes of examples. Then follows a general statement as to collective nouns, and four definitions. Below these are four remarks, and then twenty Scripture references for study.

America thus sends her challenge to Prof. A. B. Davidson, of Edinburgh, to whom we have long looked for a complete and scientific statement of the principles of Hebrew syntax. There is certainly room for such a book, and Prof. Davidson is the man to prepare it.

PENTATEUCH CRITICISM.—Twelve of our Old Testament scholars have combined to erect a bulwark against the modern critical school as represented by Graf, Kuenen, and Wellhausen, by means of a little volume entitled, *Essays on Pentateuchal Criticism. By Various Writers*.² The object of the *Essays* is to establish the evidences of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. All the writers occupy substantially the same standpoint, although Dr. Schodde approaches somewhat the principles of criticism held by such scholars as the elder Delitzsch, Strack, Cheyne, and Driver. Chambers gives a brief historical introduction. Gardiner discusses the question, "Was the religion of Israel a revelation or a merely human development?" Bissell, who is well known through his volume on *The Pentateuch, its Origin and Structure*, seeks to show that there is no conflict in the precepts of the Pentateuch codes. Green subjects the analysis of the critics in the first eleven chapters of Exodus to an acute examination, and concludes that "the critical hypothesis is beset by insuperable difficulties."

¹ Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1883.

² Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1888.

Schodde, while admitting that the Pentateuch does not furnish any direct testimony to prove "that Moses himself wrote or caused to be written the whole of the five books," finds strong indirect testimony, which is sustained by the New Testament. Nevertheless he says the Pentateuch is not Mosaic "in the sense that every word of it was written by the lawgiver, but in the sense that the laws were promulgated through him." Beecher adduces the testimony of the historical books, save Chronicles, to the authorship of the Pentateuch; Terry that of Chronicles; and Harmon of the prophetic and poetical books of the Old Testament. Dwinell treats in a dogmatic tone of "the higher criticism and a spent Bible." Streibert presents the difficulties of the new hypothesis, and Hemphill emphasises the validity and bearing of the testimony of Christ and His apostles. Osgood directs especial attention to the peoples among whom the children of Israel originated and attained their majority,—Assyria, Egypt, and ancient Syria,—and argues against the assumption of those critics who believe them to have been an ignorant horde of barbarians, and entirely destitute of the first pre-requisites of a literature in the time of Moses.

EXEGESIS.—The year has not been fruitful in commentaries. A little pamphlet (50 pp.) by Rev. William C. Daland, on the *Song of Songs*, is worthy of mention. He considers the Song of Songs a drama in five acts, a product of the wisdom literature of the time of Solomon, and that the object of it is to set forth the triumph of woman's virtue over the powerful seductions of Solomon. He finds in it a companion piece to the book of Job. The translation is beautiful, and the notes are brief and pertinent.

ANTIQUITIES.—A book especially adapted for the wants of Sunday-school teachers on *Biblical Antiquities*,¹ has been prepared by Dr. Bissell, whose name has been already mentioned. It is divided into three parts: "Domestic Antiquities," "Civil Antiquities," and "Sacred Antiquities." Dr. Bissell's previous studies have fitted him pre-eminently for the preparation of such a work. It indicates industry and research, but does not enter into the discussion of critical questions.

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¹ The American Sunday-school Union, Philadelphia, 1888.