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**ART. I.—THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES: ITS NATURE  
AND EXTENT.**

1. **THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION**; being an Inquiry concerning the Infallibility, Inspiration, and Authority of Holy Writ. By the Rev. John Macnaught, M.A., Oxon., Incumbent of St. Chrysostom's Church, Everton, Liverpool. New York: C. Blanchard, 1857.
2. **CONFESSIONS OF AN INQUIRING SPIRIT.** By Samuel T. Coleridge. Edited from the Author's Manuscripts, by H. N. Coleridge. London: 1840.
3. **THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION.** By J. D. Morell, A.M., Author of the History of Modern Philosophy, &c. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1849.
4. **THEOLOGICAL ESSAYS.** By Frederick Dennison Maurice, M.A., Chaplain of Lincoln's Inn, and Professor of Divinity in King's College, London. Cambridge: Macmillan & Co., 1853.
5. **A DISCOURSE ON MATTERS PERTAINING TO RELIGION.** By Theodore Parker, Minister of the Second Church in Roxbury. Boston: Little & Brown, 1842.

It is a noticeable and significant fact that a large share  
VOL. X.—NO. I.

## ART. IV.—REV. J. L. PORTER'S DAMASCUS AND PALMYRA.

BY REV. J. FORSYTH, JUN., D.D.

FIVE YEARS IN DAMASCUS: Including an Account of the History, Topography, and Antiquities of that City, with Travels and Researches in Palmyra, Lebanon, and the Hauran. By Rev. J. L. Porter, A.M., F.R.S.L. 2 Vols. London: John Murray, Albemarle street.

So many narratives of Oriental travel have been published during the last few years, that the work whose title we have given, runs some risk of being lost in the crowd, and it is quite probable that many of our readers are unacquainted with it. We can assure them that these volumes are well worthy of their attention, especially if they have any fondness for the study of sacred geography. For nearly eight years past the author has been connected with the mission at Damascus, which is sustained jointly by the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church of our own country, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Mr. Porter's volumes are not made up of the cursory observations of the traveller hurrying through a country as if he had been under a wager "to do the thing up" in the shortest possible time, but they present us with the careful researches and deliberate views of an old resident. His professional duties obliged him to study the language and habits of the people of Syria; and his acquaintance with Arabs, and his perfect command of Arabic, gave him access to sources of information, historical, social, and topographical, not open to the mass of travellers, and which few of them could turn to account, even if within their reach.

Various other works might be named, which to the common reader would prove more interesting,—works containing more graphic descriptions of the glorious scenery of those Oriental climes, and more dramatic pictures of Oriental society in some of its aspects; but to the Biblical student who desires to get an accurate knowledge of the geography of the Holy Land, and of the existing condition of

particular provinces and cities of that country, whose names occur in Sacred History, these volumes cannot fail to prove eminently attractive. Mr. Porter has penetrated into regions lying quite aside from the ordinary line of Eastern travel, and which, since the days of Burckhardt, have not been visited by any European traveller who had the leisure or the science requisite to make a full and precise survey of them. He has thus been enabled to correct errors into which even so eminent a geographer as Ritter has been occasionally betrayed. A new light has been shed upon a large portion of that interesting region, east of Jordan, known as the ancient Bashan, and upon some of the adjoining provinces, which tourists have hitherto deemed almost inaccessible. The author was led to make these extensive journeys, mainly with a view to survey the field passed over, with the eye of a Christian missionary, but he has been at the same time not unmindful of those other subordinate, and in their place important objects, which would arrest the attention of the artist, the antiquary, and the geographer. The work is adorned with a number of sketches, drawn by the author on the spot, and its value is much enhanced by a map of the city of Damascus, and a large one of the ancient Bashan and Galilee, founded on surveys made by himself.

Mr. Porter arrived in Damascus in the early part of the year 1850, and with the exception of a short visit to Ireland, his native country, he has resided there from that day to this.

After an introductory chapter containing a narrative of his voyage from Britain to Syria, and of the circumstances attending his entrance upon his field of labor, he proceeds to give an extended account of the history, topography, and the present social and religious condition of Damascus. He observes that there is no city named in Scripture, not excepting Jerusalem, whose site is more certainly identified, than is that of Damascus. Beyond a doubt, it is one of the very oldest cities in the world. It has been in existence for at least 4000 years, it has been the contemporary of those early centres of empire and commerce, Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre and Sidon,—of Assyria, Persia, Macedonia, Greece, and Rome; and if we cannot say that it survives

in undiminished splendor, we can at least affirm that it still maintains a vigorous life. It is a connecting link between hoary antiquity and the living present.

This singularly persistent vitality is probably to be ascribed, in part, to advantages of its position, which surpass those of any other inland city of Western Asia. Damascus stands near the eastern base of Anti-Libanus, on a noble plain, some two thousand feet above the level of the sea, which is bounded on the north-west by a chain of chalk hills starting from the foot of Hermon, and on the south by another range of hills, between which flows the *Awa*—the ancient *Pharphar*. Another fine stream—the *Barada*, or the ancient *Abana*—descends from Lebanon, and breaking through the lower ridge of mountains, by a wild and romantic ravine, crosses the plain eastward. On the banks of this river, and about a mile from the ravine, the environs of the city commence. It supplies the city with abundance of water, that prime necessity of comfort in that burning clime, every house having its sparkling fountain, while by means of innumerable canals, the stream is conveyed in all directions over the plain, covering it with perpetual verdure and exuberant wealth. The laws regulating these canals (as well as the canals themselves), are of very ancient origin; they are very minute; the structures are a noble monument of the engineering skill, of the wealth and the enterprise of former generations; but these works, so essential to the health of the city and the fertility of the plain, under the abominable government of the Turks, are greatly neglected, and, as a consequence, large districts once under culture are being encroached upon by the sands of the desert.

The view of Damascus from the last ridge of Anti-Libanus is represented as being “rich and grand, almost beyond conception.” The elevation is about five hundred feet above the city, which is a mile and a half distant. Graceful minarets and swelling domes rise up in every direction, from the confused mass of terraced roofs, while occasionally their glittering tops appear above the deep green foliage, like diamonds set in emeralds. In the centre stands the noble pile of the Great Mosque, near which are the massive towers and battlemented walls of the old castle.

Away in the south, at the end of a long narrow suburb—the Medan—is the famous “Gate of God,” where the great annual caravan of pilgrims take leave of the city. The buildings of Damascus are all of a snowy whiteness, finely contrasting with the deep green of the abundant foliage. The gardens and orchards, extending for miles on both sides of the Barada, have long been celebrated, and convert the suburbs of the city into an earthly paradise. But in the case of Damascus, as of all other Oriental cities, the instant the traveller enters the gates he finds that “distance lends enchantment to the view.” He discovers on all hands narrow streets, unspeakable filth, and houses which look abnormal piles of mud, stone, and timber. As he approaches the centre of the city, his eye will be attracted by the gay bazaars, and the picturesque groups in gorgeous costumes lounging in the open cafés. Nearly every Eastern nation has its distinctly marked representative in the crowd—the Damascus merchant, the Turkish effendi, the mountain prince, the dark-visaged Bedawy of the desert, the Druze sheick, the Kurdish shepherd, the villanous-looking Albanian, who is quite as bad as he looks.

“The street that is called Straight”—the old Via Recta—extends, as it did centuries ago, east and west, across the entire enceinte of the city. It still bears its ancient name, and is nearly, if not exactly, on its old site. The house of Ananias and the part of the wall where Paul escaped are also shown, but there is reason to doubt of their identity. Like all other Oriental cities, Damascus is divided into “quarters,” for the several races and religions which compose and divide its population. The Jewish is in the South, the Christian in the North-east, the Moslem in the West. The last-named class is about three times as numerous as the other two, and down to a very recent date were noted even in Syria for the fierceness of their bigotry, and their intense hatred of “infidels,” so that a European appearing in the streets in a Frank dress, ran no little risk of his life.

The history of Damascus, as we have already said, covers a period of not less than four thousand years. It existed in the days of Abraham, and how much earlier it is impossible to determine. Probably it was, for reasons previously mentioned, one of the first spots in Eastern Syria, on which

settled habitations were erected. Mr. Porter divides the history into five periods, viz. :—1, from the earliest notice of it in Scripture, till the capture of the city by Tiglath-pileser; 2, closes with its capture by Alexander the Great; 3, with the capture of the Romans; 4, with the conquest of the Moslems; 5, reaches to the present day.

The city is first noticed in the Old Testament, in Gen. xv. Then it disappears for centuries, until the reign of David. Next come the conflicts with Israel, in the days of Hazael; and finally, just before the fall of the kingdom of Israel, the same monarch by whom the ten tribes were carried away, captures Damascus, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: "Damascus is taken away from being a city," *i.e.* it ceased to be a capital, a condition in which it remained during many centuries. After the conquest of Syria by Alexander, it continued in the hands of his successors, the Seleucidæ, until about B.C. 65, when it came under the power of Rome. Amid the disorders prevalent in Syria, in consequence of the remoteness of the central government, and afterwards by the contests of the factions striving for the mastery of the Roman empire, it was hardly possible for such a city as Damascus to escape the calamities of the times; yet she suffered less than others. Strabo, who appears to have visited the place, describes the "region of Damascus as so justly celebrated, and the city itself as worthy of high admiration—one of the most magnificent in these climes." Existing monuments attest that during the Roman rule, the whole district made great progress in enterprise and wealth. Fine roads were constructed, and so permanently that they are not yet worn out. Spacious theatres, sculptured palaces, hippodromes, colonnades, temples, were erected in city and country, remnants of which survive as witnesses that the age was one of splendid material prosperity. The Damascus of that day will be ever memorable from its connexion with the conversion of St. Paul, and as the spot on which he began his glorious career as the apostle of Jesus; but otherwise the city does not figure much in the annals of the Christian church.

The Saracen army appeared under the walls of Damascus A.D. 611, only thirteen years after the Hegira. At no period in its history had the city been in greater peril of

utter destruction than it was at this moment. Khaled, one of the Moslem leaders, maddened by the loss of some of his dearest friends, swore that he would put every Damascene to the sword, and raze the city to the ground. At the instant when his wrath was hottest, a traitor priest opened the eastern gate, through which Khaled and his followers rushed, and soon the streets were deluged with blood. But fortunately for Damascus, at that same moment the western gate had been opened in virtue of a treaty of the citizens with the milder Abu Obeidah. The two Arab leaders, with their respective bands, met in the centre of the city, each, until then, ignorant of the doings of the other. After a stormy scene between them, Khaled was forced to yield. The city was saved. Such of the Christians as chose were allowed to depart with their arms and property; those who remained were permitted to stay in peace on payment of the capitation tax. Seven churches were secured to them, and half of the immense cathedral of St. John. Twenty-seven years later it became the capital of the Mohammedan empire, and continued to be such until the seat of government was removed to Bagdad, in A.D. 750, when the sceptre of Islam was wrested from the feeble grasp of the last scion of the Omeryades. Then came the troubles resulting from the conquests of the Seljukian Turks, who so suddenly and successfully precipitated themselves upon Western Asia, and those produced by the protracted struggle of the Crusaders to regain possession of the Holy Land, and to establish the kingdom of Jerusalem. In A.D. 1174, under the great Saladin, Damascus again, for a short time, was restored to her ancient position as the capital of a vast empire; but this season of glory was as brief as it was bright. Another period of horrible confusion followed, while Timourlane, that most terrible of all Tartars, was flying like the angel of death over the world. Timourlane captured the city, and enraged by a sudden outburst of patriotic courage, which, however, in the circumstances, was an act of bad faith on the part of the citizens, the conqueror inflicted the most savage cruelties upon the wretched inhabitants. In a single day the gathered riches of centuries were scattered to the winds. Last of all came the Ottoman, under whose dominion, nominally at least, Damascus has remained until this

day. We say *nominally*, because until the interference of the Western powers to protect the Sultan against the encroachments of his ambitious vassal, the energetic Ali Pasha of Egypt, Syria was for a number of years a dependency of Cairo rather than of Constantinople.

It was during the occupation of Damascus by Ali's distinguished son, Ibrahim Pasha, that the city was first opened to the representatives of the Christian kingdoms of Europe. The British consul, in full costume, entered the city, but neither his dress nor his dignity would have saved him from the fury of the fanatical inhabitants if he had not been protected by a company of Ibrahim's soldiers; they were forced to content themselves with muttering curses in private, which they no doubt did with hearty emphasis. Since that time, however, the presence of European consuls, and especially the tact, ability, and energy of Mr. Wood, the British consul, have wrought a complete revolution in the feelings and conduct of the mass of the population. Our mission families there have been not only undisturbed in the prosecution of their work, but have enjoyed a good deal of social and friendly intercourse with the very class once so famed for their intense fanaticism. We close this hasty survey of the history of Damascus with the religious statistics of the city as given by our author. His estimate, after the most careful inquiry, is as follows:—*Moslems*, 98,000; *Druzes*, 500; *Greek church*, 5,995; *Greek Catholic*, 6,195; *Syrian*, 260; *Syrian Catholic*, 350; *Maronite*, 405; *Armenian*, 405; *Armenian Catholic*, 235; *Latin*, 110; *Protestant*, 70; *strangers, soldiers, slaves*, 15,000; *Jews*, 5,730.

The character of the Turks and of the Moslems generally, in the Ottoman empire, has been drawn by a great many modern travellers, and while certain traits appear in all the pictures, yet some of the portraits are much darker and more repulsive than others. Some have represented the genuine unadulterated Turk of the old school, as a person worthy of all respect for his truthfulness, his honesty, and his real kindness of heart; while others, arguing perhaps from their own limited personal experience, insist upon it that he is an unmitigated reprobate. It is reasonable to suppose, that in an empire so widely extended, and so various in climate as that of the Sultan, there would be consider-



able diversity of character even in the dominant race ; that the Turk of Adrianople, for example, would materially differ, for better or for worse, from the Turk of Damascus, though both come of a common ancestry. Mr. Porter, however, when treating of the moral and social characteristics of the people of Damascus, makes no distinction between the Turk and the Arab, but uses the general term of Moslems, whom he describes as, in general, feeble, licentious, and fanatical. He takes Mr. Lane and Mr. Urquhart to task for certain statements of theirs, in which they affirm that the practical effects of Oriental polygamy are far less injurious to society than the profligacy of Europe. Mr. Porter emphatically denies this averment, and maintains that the abominations almost universally practised in Moslem cities far exceed the worst vices of the most degraded classes in Christian lands. "Virtue," he adds, "as a moral principle, is unknown to either sex in this land." The disgusting obscenities of the *harem*, the unnatural vices of the men, and the filthy conversation among all classes, of all ages, of both sexes, must have revealed to Mr. Urquhart, had he studied the habits of the people, and the influence of Moslem institutions, the deep depravity in which this unhappy country is engulfed. Bad as the cities of Europe are, in them vice is mainly confined to particular localities or classes, but in the East it has spread over the nation like a pestilential miasma, corrupting every dwelling, giving wantonness to every thought and look, as well as pollution to the very language which is the medium of social intercourse.

Moslems divide their time between indolence and indulgence, wandering with solemn step from the harem to the bath, and from the bath to the mosque. They are emphatically both a praying and a washing people, and in these respects they put to shame multitudes who profess a pure religion and to have reached a higher civilization. But, after all, their prayers are a mere *opus operatum*, a simple performance, which comes in at stated hours, as an interlude in the daily business of lying, cheating, and robbery. A pasha will issue orders for the perpetration of the most savage cruelty, and should he hear the next moment the muezzin's call, he will spread his carpet, stroke his beard, and pray

with a solemn serenity of countenance perfectly wonderful, and which would be quite edifying to all who knew not the villany of the man. Such is and must be the moral condition of a community where woman is regarded, as the religion of the Moslem teaches him to look upon her, as the mere instrument of his pleasures. And such, ere long, must be the state of things in that territory of our own near the shores of the Pacific, where the devotees of Mormonism, which is just Mohammedanism in its worst form, under a new name, have congregated in such numbers as almost to bid defiance to our government. It seems to us that no sensible American who has himself visited the East, or has made himself acquainted with the moral and social condition of those regions, will for one moment allow any political theory, or cant about religious liberty, or even constitutional scruple, to stand in the way of his determination to put down the hideous system which has intrenched itself amid the Rocky Mountains.

The Christians of Damascus, as everywhere else in the East, are split up into numerous "communions," that not only hold no fellowship together, but often exhibit a mutual hostility hardly less bitter than is their hatred of their common master and enemy, the Moslem. Still, their condition has much improved of late years. They constitute the industrial and enterprising class of *Damastus*; the trade of the place is mainly in their hands; they feel secure in amassing and in showing their wealth. This result is largely owing to the influence of the English consul, Mr. Wood, whose energetic remonstrances and bold measures have, on various occasions, kept down the old fanaticism when it was ready to burst forth anew.

The first Protestant mission was established here in 1843, by the Rev. Dr. Wilson, now of Bombay, and the Rev. William Graham of the Irish Presbyterian church. Originally it was intended for the Jews alone, and for some years its operations were confined to this class; but in process of time the field of labor was enlarged, so as to embrace the whole accessible portion of the population. No direct efforts, of course, have been made to convert the Moslem, though the missionaries assure us that numbers of them are quite ready to read the Scriptures, and to converse upon the

subject of religion. But the old and terrible law against apostasy seemed to encircle the followers of the false prophet with an adamant wall. Since the war with Russia this law has been repealed, so far as it can be by the Sultan ; but it is one thing to take it off the statute book, and quite another thing to expunge it from the popular heart. Our missionary brethren there will still need to use great caution, to combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove ; for we are well persuaded that the open renunciation of his religion by a Moslem would cost him his life, and for a time at least break up the mission. The progress of the good work among Jews and nominal Christians, though slow, has been as rapid as could be reasonably expected, considering the nature of the field. A small number of persons have been turned from darkness to light, one of whom is Dr. Meshaka, the most eminent native physician in the city, and a gentleman of highly respectable literary attainments, and thus a good foundation has been laid for the time to come.

The largest portion of the two volumes is taken up with a narrative of the various journeys of Mr. Porter, in company with one or more of his fellow-laborers, to the ancient Tadmor in the wilderness, to Lebanon, and to the Hauran, or Bashan. His familiarity with the Arabic language, and his scientific and artistic accomplishments, as well as his personal acquaintance with the prominent personages in different parts of the country, gave the author great advantages over most travellers. The record of his journey into the Hauran, or the Bashan, is very full, and although not so attractive to the general reader as some other portions of the work, cannot fail to interest the student of Biblical geography. From the time of his first arrival in Syria, Mr. Porter felt a strong desire to explore the region comprehended in the ancient provinces of *Batanæa*, *Auronitis*, and *Trachonitis*. Of course his primary object was to examine the moral condition of the mixed population of the district, and to ascertain whether schools could be advantageously established in their villages. Although the Hauran is the granary of Damascus, the character and habits of the people were little known. He was not able, for three years, to carry his design into execution, and meanwhile he prepared

himself to investigate the topography and antiquities of this interesting region by the perusal of Burckhardt's Notes, Robinson and Smith's Researches, and especially by the careful study of the Bible, and the writings of Josephus. He started upon his tour in January, 1853, accompanied by his colleague, the Rev. Mr. Barnett, and another American gentleman, whose name is not given. On several occasions the whole company was in extreme danger from the fanatical bigotry of the Moslems, stimulated as it was by the suspicion that they were spies; but from the Druzes of the district they experienced the utmost and uniform kindness and hospitality. The details of a Druze feast in honor of the strangers are given by the author in illustration of the fact, that in this ancient kingdom of Bashan, the lapse of three thousand years has made little change in the customs of society. The hospitality of those early ages still survives, when the stranger could not pass the tent of the patriarch without being compelled to stop and refresh himself. There is the same expedition in preparing the lamb, the kid, or the fatted calf, and other dainties, as was exhibited by Abraham when he obliged the three men to become his guests, and it is an incident of every-day life.

We cannot follow the author in his travels, nor will the limits of our article allow us to notice, even in a cursory way, the disquisitions in which he endeavors to define the boundaries of the ancient provinces before named. Suffice it to say that almost every step of his journey furnished new proof of the exact truthfulness of all those notices of this region which we find in Sacred Scripture, and of the exact accomplishment of those prophecies respecting it which were uttered ages ago. The soil of the region is of unrivalled fertility, and the wheat is celebrated as the finest in Syria. Its hill-sides and mountains are covered with a luxuriant growth of evergreen oaks, the "oaks of Bashan," so famed in sacred story. The scenery is represented to be the most beautiful in Palestine—a panorama including hill and vale, graceful wooded slopes and wild secluded glens, frowning cliffs with battlemented summits; moss-grown ruins and groups of tapering columns springing up from amid the dense foliage of evergreen oaks. Elsewhere, the author says, he had been struck with the nakedness of Syrian ruins; but

here the scene is wholly changed, for all defects are hidden by the fresh and abundant foliage, and the beauty of the noble portico and massive wall is enhanced by the luxuriant creepers that wreath themselves as garlands around the pillars and capitals.

From the accounts we have of Bashan, in Old Testament history, it is evident that it must have been from a very early period an exceedingly populous kingdom, or rather cluster of kingdoms. Argob alone, we are told (Deut. iii. 4), contained *three score* cities fenced with high walls, gates, and bars, besides a great many unwalled towns. Mr. Porter says that he long thought "that some strange statistical mystery hung over this passage." It seemed inexplicable to him, that a district so far from the sea, watered by no rivers of importance, and which as laid down upon our common maps appeared no larger than an English county, should have contained such a multitude of walled cities. But on the spot, he found this statement true in every particular. Lists of *more than a hundred* ruined cities and villages he himself tested, and discovered to be correct though not complete. Of the high antiquity of these ruins, no one can doubt for a moment who sees them. Many of them betray the handiwork of those Cyclopean architects, whose remaining monuments afford visible proof that there were indeed "giants in those days." The houses at Kureiyeh, built no doubt by the Rephaims, the aborigines of the region, have huge doors and gates of stone, some of which are nearly eighteen inches in thickness, while their roofs are made of heavy stone flags that rest on massive walls of black basalt, firm as the solid rock, and harder than iron. In short, the structures clearly belong to a period when strength and security were chiefly regarded; they are such as bid defiance to the tooth of time, and, as Ritter observes, they "remain as eternal witnesses of the conquest of Bashan by Jehovah." It therefore need not surprise us to be informed that some of these cities stand to this day, not so much in ruins, as empty, without owners or inhabitants, but ready to be occupied by the first comers who should choose to fix their abodes there. This single fact speaks volumes in regard to the abominable mis-government of the country by its Turkish masters; and we are half inclined to

wish that the great Powers of Europe would make a full end of the Turk, and divide among themselves that glorious empire of which he has proved himself to be so utterly unworthy.

ART. V.—THE PARABLES OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

XXVI. THE LOST SHEEP.

Luke xv. 1-7; Matt. xviii. 11-14.

THIS parable was designed to confute the false notion of the Pharisees and scribes, who deemed it unsuitable that Christ, if a messenger from God, should allow publicans and sinners to approach him, and should address them as though they might obtain the salvation he came to proclaim.

“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” Luke xv. 1, 2.

They seem thus to have thought it was not only inconsistent with the holiness and dignity of a messenger from God, but indicative that he was on a level in his principles and dispositions with the wicked, whom, instead of sternly repelling, he permitted to approach and receive him as a teacher sent to them, as well as to others. The Pharisees and scribes, vain, self-righteous, and blind, thought God would regard none with favor but themselves. That the openly guilty, that the most hopelessly lost in sin, could be objects of his compassion, had never entered their conceptions, and was most repugnant to their pride and bigotry. To meet this misapprehension Christ spake the parable.

“And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you that likewise joy