Cuéllar, Gregory L. "S. R. Driver and Higher Criticism: Mapping 'The Differences of Race' in Genesis." : *Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts, and in Modern Biblical Interpretation*. Ed. Katherine M Hockey and David G Horrell. London: T&T CLARK, 2018. 75–91. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780567677334.0012>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 10:07 UTC.

Copyright © Katherine M. Hockey and David G. Horrell 2018. Released under a CC BY-NC-ND licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

S. R. Driver and Higher Criticism: Mapping ‘The Differences of Race’ in Genesis

Gregory L. Cuéllar

A full representative assembly of clergy and laity was present for the thirty-fourth meeting of the Church Congress held in the city of Exeter on 9 October 1894. As reported in *The Church of England Pulpit and Ecclesiastical Review*, ‘the meetings have, perhaps, not been quite so lively as those at Birmingham, but that again was to be expected. The West Country folk are less demonstrative than the Midlanders.’¹ Yet despite the region’s tranquil demeanour, there was no lack of enthusiasm, with over 6,000 tickets taken during the four days of the Congress.² Clearly, those organizing the official programme had no intention of shying away from religious and social controversies of the day. The occasion called for an ambitious agenda of topics like Biblical Criticism, the Mission of a Mother, Temperance Work and Legislation, the Catholic Church, the Care of the Poor, Secondary Education and Public Schools, the Ethics of Amusement, Church Reform and Discipline, Foreign Missions of the Church, Soldiers and Sailors, and the Doctrine and Dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

According to Rev. C. Dunkley, editor of the official proceedings, the audiences were generally well-mannered at all twenty-seven Congress meetings. In his words, ‘This Congress was exceptionally favoured in having fewer peripatetic hearers than are customarily met with on these occasions. Members for the most part stuck to the subject of their choice, and sat out the discussion.’³ Among the few exceptions was the meeting on Biblical Criticism between Rev. Joseph Leycester Lyne, also known as Father Ignatius of Llanthony Abbey, and Rev. Samuel Rolles Driver, Regius Professor of Hebrew and Canon of Christ Church at Oxford. Since the Birmingham Church Congress in 1893, Father Ignatius had solidified his reputation as a zealous opponent of Higher Criticism. During the Congress meeting on the Reunion of Christendom, he erupted with a vociferous protest against Rev. Charles Gore because of his 1889 essay entitled ‘Holy

¹ Anon., ‘Church Notes’, *The Church of England Pulpit and Ecclesiastical Review* 38, no. 967 (July–December 1894): 188.

² Herbert Edward Reynolds, *A Short History of the Ancient Diocese of Exeter: From the Conquest to the Church Congress of 1894* (Cambridge: H. Besley & Son, 1895), 451.

³ C. Dunkley, preface to *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Exeter* (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1894), vi.

Spirit and Inspiration'. Using Higher Criticism, Gore had argued against the orthodox view that the Bible was infallible.⁴ Reports of Father Ignatius' outburst even appeared in the US press. The New York-based newspaper, *Outlook*, described the scene thus: 'When Mr. Gore attempted to speak, Father Ignatius, in full monkish garb, sprang to the front beneath the platform, and, with uplifted hand and vehement gesture, protested that "Charles Gore had no right to speak".'⁵ As recorded in the official proceedings, Lord Bishop J. J. Stewart Perowne, Congress president and presiding chair, interjected with a call for order, but to no avail. Amid the widespread commotion, Father Ignatius lifted up a copy of the book *Lux Mundi*, which contained Gore's essay, and shouted again 'I protest in the name of Jesus Christ against Charles Gore being allowed to speak.'⁶ Later in the meeting, he again hastened towards the platform and declared that he indeed had a right to address the meeting.⁷ Chairman Perowne sternly refused to grant him a hearing on the basis that his only objective was to attack a fellow Churchman.⁸ At another interval during the meeting, a section of the audience demanded a hearing from Father Ignatius and began shouting repeatedly 'Ignatius', which, in turn, was followed by counter-shouts of 'Chair'.⁹ Chairman Perowne appealed to the audience, stating, 'I think we should not turn this hall into a House of Commons.'¹⁰ The audience was in such an uproar that the Mayor of Birmingham intervened alongside Chairman Perowne to restore order. Father Ignatius, however, remained obstinate in his desire to speak to the point that he declared 'that he would be taken out by the police and no other party'.¹¹ Eventually, order was established and the meeting concluded without any further incident.

As for the meeting on Biblical Criticism at the Exeter Church Congress, a similar scene was anticipated from Father Ignatius. Prior to the event, the British press gave ample warning of his intentions to attend the Church Congress in Exeter for the sole purpose of uttering his protest against advocates of Higher Criticism, in particular Canon S. R. Driver.¹² By this time, Driver not only was thoroughly familiar with German (Delitzsch, Dillmann, Wellhausen), North American (Briggs), and British (Robertson Smith, T. K. Cheyne) versions of Higher Criticism, but also had made significant contributions to this discourse in multiple articles and most notably in his 1891 book *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*.¹³ In fact, even before the Birmingham Church Congress, Father Ignatius had issued a letter of

⁴ Anon., 'The Religious World', *The Outlook: A Family Paper* 48, no. 19 (4 November 1893): 815–16, at 815.

⁵ Anon., 'The Religious World', 815.

⁶ C. Dunkley, ed., *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Birmingham* (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1893), 320.

⁷ Dunkley, *Official Report – Birmingham*, 336.

⁸ Dunkley, *Official Report – Exeter*, 337.

⁹ Dunkley, *Official Report – Exeter*, 337.

¹⁰ Dunkley, *Official Report – Exeter*, 337.

¹¹ Dunkley, *Official Report – Exeter*, 337.

¹² Anon., 'Father Ignatius in Cardiff', *The Tablet* 83 (11 August 1894): 15; Anon., 'Loigny, 1894', *The Church of England Pulpit and Ecclesiastical Review* 38, no. 967 (18 August 1894): 78; Beatrice de Bertouch, *The Life of Father Ignatius O.S.B.: The Monk of Llanthony* (London: Methuen & Co., 1904), 579.

¹³ See S. R. Driver, 'The Critical Study of the Old Testament', *Contemporary Review* 57 (1890): 215–31; Anon., 'Professor Driver's Paper at Southwell', *The Guardian*, 28 November 1888, 1810; S. R. Driver, 'The Cosmogony of Genesis', *The Expositor* 3, no. 3 (January 1886): 23–45.

caution to the event organizers against Rev. Driver's participation in the meetings – claiming that he was a blasphemer of Christ for having identified himself with 'the false German Criticism'.¹⁴

Safeguarding the Church of England from Higher Criticism was not just the exclusive mission of Father Ignatius. Rev. Frederick Temple, Lord Bishop of London, and Rev. Edward H. Bickersteth, Lord Bishop of Exeter and president of the Congress, were some of the most prominent clergy at the Exeter Church Congress who also sought to mitigate Britain's acceptance of Higher Criticism. In his opening sermon at the Exeter Cathedral, Bishop Temple set the context for the Congress with these words: 'Ever since the tremendous crash of the great French Revolution, at the end of the last century, broke up men's belief in the permanence of ordinary institutions, there has been a spirit of questioning which seems to increase in strength as time goes on.'¹⁵ For Bishop Temple this 'spirit of questioning' showed no restraint, asking, 'Is there, indeed, a God that made and that rules the world? Has He, indeed, made a revelation to mankind? Is there any reason for saying that the Book which Christians honour is such a revelation?'¹⁶ Shortly after, Bishop Bickersteth embraced a similar tone in his inaugural address as Congress president, which he delivered in the large Victoria Hall. In his view, the two pressing issues of the day were Church Reform and the Church's Mission to non-Christian lands.¹⁷ First and foremost among the subjects bearing on Church Reform was Biblical Criticism, stating that 'England's Church has never feared Biblical Criticism when serious and reverent Very much, however, of that which assumes the name of the Higher Criticism is not serious and faithful, but superficial and skeptical.'¹⁸ Later in the afternoon, the meeting on Biblical Criticism took place in the Royal Public Rooms. In a telling opening statement as presiding Chair, Rev. Alfred Barry, Bishop of Sydney, hinted at the state of the discourse in late-nineteenth-century Victorian Britain, stating that 'the subject which we have to discuss to-day is one which are called "burning questions"'.¹⁹ Those appointed to speak represented a range of epistemological positions from scientific to orthodox. Rev. C. Waldergrave Sandford, Lord Bishop of Gibraltar, took the platform first and presented an apologetic paper on behalf of orthodox teaching entitled, 'The Grounds of Our Belief in the Divine Origin and Authority of the Holy Scriptures'.²⁰ Next was S. R. Driver, who contributed a paper entitled 'The Growth of the Old Testament'. Before I take up the content of Driver's paper and his broader contributions to Higher Criticism, it is important to note that, unlike the Birmingham incident, Father Ignatius was officially given ten minutes before the end of the meeting to address the audience, barring any personal controversy. The bulk of his response was scoldingly directed against Driver, from which the following words deserve mentioning:

¹⁴ Anon., 'Summaries', *The Church Eclectic: An Anglo-Catholic Magazine of Church Literature with Notes and Summaries* 21, no. 7 (October 1893): 664.

¹⁵ Dunkley, *The Official Report – Exeter*, 4.

¹⁶ Dunkley, *The Official Report – Exeter*, 6.

¹⁷ Francis Keyes Aglionby, *The Life of Edward Henry Bickersteth D.D., Bishop and Poet* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907), 86.

¹⁸ Dunkley, *The Official Report – Exeter*, 14.

¹⁹ Dunkley, *The Official Report – Exeter*, 58.

²⁰ C. Waldergrave Sandford, 'The Grounds of Our Belief in the Divine Origin and Authority of the Holy Scriptures', in *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Exeter*, ed. C. Dunkley (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1894), 59–64.

I think that the paper which the learned professor and dignitary from Oxford has read, has placed us all in a very solemn position in regard to Christendom in general, and of the Church of England in particular I say that the paper to which I refer contradicts the teaching of Jesus Christ. It contradicts the unanimous consciousness of the Christian Church for eighteen centuries. I do not want at all to derogate from the majesty of criticism and science, but I do say that souls are not saved, and lives are not elevated, by criticism and science.²¹

As myopic as Father Ignatius' words may seem, his description of Driver's paper rightly pointed to both 'criticism and science' in defining his approach to the Bible. In terms of the science of Driver's Higher Criticism, it functioned in the modern Western European sense in that his analysis of scripture privileged logical positivism.²² Hence, Driver qualified sight and human reason as the master senses for generating truth-claims about the Bible's historic origin and literary development. Borrowing specifically from the natural sciences, he inspected the biblical version deemed 'original' by textual critics as an object bearing traces of predictable human activity, which by analogy remained constant for some populations across time. For instance, in his paper, he set out to show 'how the growth of the Old Testament is correlated with the development of religious truth, and how the historical character of revelation conditioned in many respects the form which it assumed, and developed in different directions the ideal of religious life'.²³ Here Driver situated the Old Testament within the time-bound realm of the natural and therefore susceptible to a series of observable processes like growth, development, and historical conditioning. As intrinsic as these natural processes were to the Old Testament's historical development, they were not exclusive to the human realm, but rather they pointed to a divine operation governing biblical revelation. As he stated,

Revelation might, so far as we can see, have consisted of a series of abstract propositions, of the nature of a creed or formulary of the faith, promulgated once for all at a particular moment of history. But the education of the race, as of the individual, is a gradual process; the mental and moral powers pass through successive stages of growth; and hence it cannot surprise us that the Author of nature should have adjusted His moral and spiritual providence to His natural providence, and have accommodated His teaching to the varying capacities of His children.²⁴

Within the conceptual framework of Driver's Higher Criticism, as reflected both in his Exeter Church Congress paper and in his broader scholarship, we find the conflation of Darwinian evolution and Victorian notions of progress.²⁵ While Driver affirmed

²¹ Dunkley, *The Official Report – Exeter*, 87.

²² S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1906), 3.

²³ S. R. Driver, 'The Growth of the Old Testament', in *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Exeter*, ed. C. Dunkley (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1894), 64.

²⁴ Driver, 'The Growth of the Old Testament', 64.

²⁵ S. R. Driver, 'Evolution Compatible with Faith', in *Sermons on Subjects Connected with the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner Son's, 1892), 13.

Western scientific notions of historical linearity and civilizational progress, he also understood them as fixed organic processes that God providentially designed and used to reveal biblical truth.²⁶ In his view, the nature of divine revelation bore its traces in the realm of human activity, which, in turn, was governed by upward moving stages of mental and moral development. Conversely, this implied that Driver stood on the other end of this natural trajectory of human advancement in which Western modernity and scientific discourse constituted higher stages of human intelligence. Ultimately, his scientifically grounded notions about the natural growth of the Old Testament not only mapped his analytical path back into the ancient world, but also they inversely pointed forward to Driver's privileged social position. In other words, the high degree to which Driver confided in the positive results of Higher Criticism corresponded to a broader Victorian certitude in Western modern advancements in particular, and the British Empire in general. This is not to deny the invigorating force of German critics like Julius Wellhausen and Franz Delitzsch on Driver's optimism for Higher Criticism but simply to render visible other ideals operating in what became his own English version of the discourse.

1 Forging a middle position

In forging a distinctive English version of Higher Criticism, Driver envisioned a middle position between Wellhausen and the reigning orthodoxy. As he expressed in a letter to Dr George Ridding, Bishop of Southwell, in 1892:

I think I had better dissociate myself from Wellhausen. It is true, I agree with him in some things, but not in others: and as he does not always express himself fully or clearly, his statements form an unsatisfactory basis to agree on. I have always felt that his positions were stated with exaggeration and that the truth probably be somewhere between his position and the traditional one: and I had hoped that I was finding my way towards this myself.²⁷

On one side, Driver found a middle-ground position by not only offering an alternative dating scheme for biblical source materials like the 'Priests' Code' (a ceremonial section in Exodus–Numbers) but also championing the moral and devotional value of the Old Testament for the Christian Church.²⁸ Yet even from this moderate position, Driver still faced harsh opposition from British clergy and orientalists alike. In coming to the defence of Higher Criticism in England, Driver certainly took a leading role – albeit

²⁶ Driver, 'The Growth of the Old Testament', 65.

²⁷ S. R. Driver, Letter to Dr. George Ridding, Bishop of Southwell, dated 10 October 1892, MS ENG LETT c.31, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

²⁸ Wellhausen argued that the entire Priests' Code was from the exilic period; as for Driver, he posited that some of it was likely from the pre-exilic period. See S. R. Driver, 'The Critical Study of the Old Testament', *Contemporary Review* 57 (February 1890): 226–8; Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 142–3. As regards the moral value of the Old Testament, see S. R. Driver, 'The Moral and Devotional Value of the Old Testament', *The Expository Times* 4, no. 3 (December 1892): 110–13.

mostly confined to the British periodical press. Important here are the ways in which the polemical exchanges between Driver and his British opponents opened a space for Driver to construct a uniquely English version of Higher Criticism. Inscribed in this process was less a general defence of the discourse than a modulated form of Higher Criticism from his specific social location.

Although not as vociferous an opponent as Father Ignatius, British Orientalist Archibald Henry Sayce issued a sharp critique against Higher Criticism in his 1894 book, *The 'Higher Criticism' and the Verdict of the Monuments*. In his opening chapter, for instance, he gives these excoriating words:

The arrogance of tone adopted at times by the 'higher criticism' has been productive of nothing but mischief; it has aroused distrust even of its most certain results, and has betrayed the critic into a dogmatism as unwarranted as it is unscientific.²⁹

Sayce's disdain for Higher Criticism was for him completely warranted given the pervasive indifference the discourse had showed towards 'oriental' archaeological discoveries. As he describes, 'the results of recent oriental discovery, so far as they bear upon this "higher criticism," are either not known at all, or else only in a vague and indefinite way.'³⁰ By this time, Driver had already responded to a similar critique by Sayce in his 1892 article for *The Expository Times* entitled, 'Professor Sayce and the "Higher Criticism"'. For our purpose, what is distinctive about their debate was how in Driver's defence of Higher Criticism we discover the contours of his conceptual framework and also his nationalistic commitments as an English higher critic. Indeed, these contours come into fuller view in his 1894 essay, 'Archaeology and the Old Testament', for *The Contemporary Review*, in which Driver issues a thorough yet unfriendly review of Sayce's book. Largely, Driver's defence of Higher Criticism was aimed at Sayce's critique of the discourse's indifference towards archaeological discoveries and its exaggerated historical scepticism.³¹ In addressing the latter charge, Driver argues that Sayce had confused Higher Criticism with what was clearly 'hyper' criticism. As he describes,

Professor Sayce uses the terms 'higher critic' and 'higher criticism' where he really means 'hyper-critic' and 'hyper-criticism'. The 'higher-critics' of whom he speaks so often with disparagement are not critics in general, but certain extreme critics, who accompany their literary criticism of the Old Testament by far-reaching and excessive historical scepticism.³²

While Driver casts doubt on Sayce's core knowledge of higher-critical scholarship, he does so as a response to the severity of Sayce's charge of 'excessive historical scepticism', which ultimately was an affront to the discourse's essential claim to scientificity.

²⁹ A. H. Sayce, *The 'Higher Criticism' and the Verdict of the Monuments* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910), 5.

³⁰ Sayce, *The 'Higher Criticism'*, 25.

³¹ Sayce, *The 'Higher Criticism'*, 24.

³² S. R. Driver, 'Archeology and the Old Testament', *The Contemporary Review* 65 (January–June 1894): 410.

As Sayce frames it, the excess of historical scepticism, or what he calls 'historical hair-splitting',³³ was symptomatic of the higher critic's deficient mode of empirical verification. In his words, 'baseless assumptions have been placed on a level with ascertained facts, hasty conclusions have been put forward as principles of science'.³⁴ To constitute Higher Criticism as a scientific discourse, Sayce argues that one must engage a 'wider and more catholic survey of the facts'.³⁵ For this reason, the discursive tenor of Driver's rebuttal possesses a retaliatory force against Sayce's attacks on Higher Criticism's scientific prestige. For both Sayce and Driver, their polemical exchange dealt with a fundamental norm of scientific investigation, which had to do with the accurate verification of empirical evidence. As a result, their debate affected more than the scientific currency of Higher Criticism. Rather, as Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, concomitant with scientific prestige is social benefit, which in this case meant that Sayce's attack would have consequently undermined Driver's scholarly capital and ecclesial status.³⁶

From the outset of his 1894 essay, Driver has in view Sayce's argument that higher critics lacked empirical depth, especially as it pertained to archaeology. As Driver describes,

From the general tenor of his [Sayce's] volume, the reader would imagine that the 'higher critic' was supremely indifferent to the facts of archaeology, and wrote with a lofty disdain of everything that was to be found in an ancient and contemporary document. Nothing could be further from the truth.³⁷

Driver proceeds to list several scholarly works by premier German higher critics like Eberhard Schrader, Wellhausen, and Dillmann that were accessible examples of the discourse's use of archaeology. From here, he then moves to the English context of which he and T. K. Cheyne were also noteworthy examples, stating that 'in this country Professor Cheyne's writings overflow with historical and other illustrations derived from monuments; while I myself in my volume on Isaiah have quoted from Assyrian and Babylonian Inscriptions to whatever materials were available for my purpose'.³⁸ Like Sayce, Driver understood that his contact with disinterred artefacts was an essential practice by which higher critics were accredited scientifically.³⁹ As evidenced in his 1888 book, *Isaiah: His Life and Times and the Writings Which Bear His Name*, his scientific gaze was not only on the literary strata of the biblical text's final form, but also on archaeological discoveries, in particular those held in the British Museum.⁴⁰ Given the widespread currency of 'oriental' archaeology within nineteenth-century Western

³³ Sayce, *The 'Higher Criticism'*, 15, 21.

³⁴ Sayce, *The 'Higher Criticism'*, 5.

³⁵ Sayce, *The 'Higher Criticism'*, 5.

³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 16.

³⁷ Driver, 'Archeology and the Old Testament', 410.

³⁸ Driver, 'Archeology and the Old Testament', 411.

³⁹ Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, 28.

⁴⁰ S. R. Driver, *Isaiah: His Life and Times and the Writings which Bear his Name* (New York: Anson D.F. Randolph & Company, 1888), 75.

scientific discourse, his failure to uphold archaeology would have had a significant social impact *and* bearing on his scientific prestige as a burgeoning English higher critic. Fostering this currency was not determined solely by men of science but more significantly by imperial global networks, state museums, and university libraries. Hence to reject 'oriental' archaeological discoveries involved far-reaching social effects, which for Driver would have meant calling into question one's nationalistic loyalties.

2 Driver's assurance in Western European prowess

In defining his form of Higher Criticism, Driver emphasized the generative scholarship associated with his modern Western European context. Among the most notable advances he often referenced was the rapid progress of archaeological discoveries in the nineteenth century. The way he understood the role of disinterred artefacts, especially in relation to Higher Criticism, was very different from biblical literalism in the sense that inscriptions, monuments, and reliefs were not used to corroborate biblical chronology, but rather to shed light on the origin and literary character of biblical texts.⁴¹ Commensurate with Driver's confidence in the progress of archaeological discoveries was his assurance in Western European prowess. As Driver states in his 1899 essay entitled 'Hebrew Authority':

Babylonia and Assyria on the one side, Egypt on the other, – these are the countries which have yielded during the last half-century the most surprising archaeological results. In both, exploration has been actively carried on: Germany and France, England and America, have alternately vied with one another in their search for the treasures buried under the mounds of Babylonia and Assyria, or the sands of Egypt. And the texts obtained from both countries have engaged the attention of a series of scholars, in most cases men of marked ability and power, who have devoted their lives to analyzing more accurately the language, to studying the antiquities, and to piecing together the history of two great nations.⁴²

Encoded in Driver's view of archaeological progress was a Western European male point of reference for 'piecing together the history' of ancient Western Asia and Northeastern Africa. Implicitly, this vantage point was positioned within an Orientalist notion that accurate historiography was intellectually out of reach for the native populations of these regions. In other words, by framing the progress of archaeology as a Western European enterprise, Driver also understood that their precise decipherment was solely under the purview of Western European men, who were of 'marked ability and power'.⁴³

Lauding the superiority of Western European archaeological achievements, Driver impressed upon his English readers an image of the extraordinary as it pertained to

⁴¹ Driver, 'Archeology and the Old Testament', 410–12.

⁴² S. R. Driver, 'Hebrew Authority', in *Authority and Archeology: Sacred and Profane*, ed. David G. Hogarth (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 4–5.

⁴³ Driver, 'Hebrew Authority', 5.

Western scholarly production. As he declares, 'Much, it is certain, remains still to be discovered; but even now it may be said that the two last generations have seen exhumed and re-constructed two entire civilizations.'⁴⁴ His logic may be easily dismissed as enthusiastic optimism in Western European modernity. However, Edward Said reminds us that part of nineteenth-century Western biblical criticism was an Orientalist rationale which viewed the people of the East as incapable of constructing an accurate history of their own cultural heritage.⁴⁵ Clearly, this rationale of Western scientific superiority persisted in Driver's higher-critical scholarship well into the early twentieth century, as demonstrated in his 1901 essay entitled 'The Old Testament in the Light of Today', where he makes the following statement within the context of modern Western progress:

The discovery and publication of inscriptions from Phoenicia, Syria, Moab, and Arabia, and the observations of travelers and explorers in the same regions, have in many important details augmented our former knowledge of the customs, and institutions, and habits of thought of Israel's neighbours, helping us thereby to realize more accurately the position taken by Israel amongst them, and the affinities mental not less than physical and material, subsisting between them.⁴⁶

In the end, what qualified Driver's biblical criticism as 'higher' was not only that he dealt with 'more difficult class of problems' but also that as a Western European he viewed himself at the apex of intellectual development.⁴⁷

3 Driver's anthropology of race

To avoid an oversimplification of Driver's sense of superiority as only finding support within the scientific currency of Western archaeological discoveries, I now turn to his discussions about the differences of race in his analysis of Genesis. Because Driver understood the accounts of the prehistoric age in Genesis as void of scientific value, he often appealed to the physical sciences and Victorian anthropologists of evolutionism in making empirical statements about the origins of the earth and humankind. In terms of the latter subject, it is in Driver's 1904 commentary on Genesis that we find a fuller version of his anthropology of race. From the outset of his commentary, Driver is clearly attuned to higher-critical concerns of Genesis' final form, such as demarcating and dating its different literary source material. As for his racial anthropology, our field of vision is limited to the interstices between the Genesis text and his higher-critical analysis. For instance, under his introductory section entitled 'The Historical Value of the Book of Genesis', Driver shifts into an anthropological argument that the differences of language and race are true evidence for the antiquity of humankind. As he describes, 'the differences distinguishing languages entirely unrelated to each other

⁴⁴ Driver, 'Hebrew Authority'.

⁴⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 2nd edn (New York: Random House, 1994), 17, 289.

⁴⁶ S. R. Driver, 'The Old-Testament in Light of To-Day', *The Expositor*, 6th ser., 3 (1875): 30.

⁴⁷ Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 3.

(as, for instance, Latin and Chinese), are dependent upon differences of race, which are not accounted for by the biblical narrative.⁴⁸ Surprisingly, Driver relied here on Sayce's comparative philology of the world's languages, which according to his 1880 book, *Introduction to the Science of Language*, reflect five main morphological types: inflectional (W. Asia and Europe), agglutinative (Turkey, Central Asia, Pacific Islands, many parts of Africa), incorporating (Basque), isolating (E. Asia), and polysynthetic (America).⁴⁹ In explaining these differences, Driver argues that 'different races do not think in the same way; and consequently the forms taken by the sentence in the languages spoken by them are not the same'.⁵⁰ For him, the differences of language not only presupposed differences of race but also the mental capacities associated with the different races. Implicit within his argument is a hierarchy of race in which grammar registered a group's inferior or superior intellect. For Sayce, the inflected languages of modern Europe stood at the apex of linguistic development, or as he states:

We have come to think that not only is the race to which we belong superior to all others, but that the languages we speak are equally superior. That the inflection is the supreme effort of linguistic energy, that it marks the highest stage in the development of speech, is regarded as a self-evident axiom.⁵¹

This held true in Driver's anthropology of race. For him, superior human intellect registered in the morphologies of different languages, which developed gradually 'at the same time that races were developed, out of some very primitive, inorganic type of speech'.⁵²

Although Driver's higher-critical aims restrained him from a more technical exposition of his anthropology of race, he was nevertheless compelled to do so in those areas of Genesis that showed a proximity to the subject of race, such as the origin of different nations in Genesis 10 and the dispersion of different languages in Genesis 11. As Driver indicates, 'differences of race, however, are not explained by the Biblical narrative; for though Gen x. is ostensibly an explanation of the origin of different nations; and though Gen xi. 1-9 might conceivably be understood as such, ... no adequate explanation is thereby obtained of the racial differences exhibited by mankind'.⁵³ It is important to note that Driver's anthropology of race was premised on the scientific notion that racial differences were a natural product of human evolution and physically fixed after extensive periods of human migration.⁵⁴ With racial differences as Driver's starting point, he thus makes sense of them not only along the lines of certain phenotypes but also according to their geographical placement. As to

⁴⁸ S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Methuen & Co., 1904), xxxv.

⁴⁹ A. H. Sayce, *Introduction to the Science of Language* (2 vols; London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880), 2:33-64.

⁵⁰ Driver, *Genesis*, xxxv.

⁵¹ Sayce, *Science of Language*, 2:66.

⁵² Driver, *Genesis*, xxxv.

⁵³ Driver, *Genesis*, xxxv.

⁵⁴ Driver, *Genesis*, 134; also S. R. Driver, 'Confusion of Tongues', in *A Dictionary of the Bible, Dealing with its Language, Literature, and Contents, Including the Biblical Theology*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), 4:790-1.

the specific combination of phenotypes marking racial differences, Driver names the following: 'colour of the skin, the physical structure and arrangement of the hair, the stature and proportions of the body, the shape of the skull, the contour of the faces, the mental capabilities and character'.⁵⁵ Not original to Driver, this particular catalogue of physical characteristics reflected the work of Victorian evolutionists A. H. Keane and E. B. Tylor. Driver made considerable use of Tylor's book *Anthropology*, particularly chapter three, 'Races of Mankind', and Keane's book *Ethnology*, primarily the chapters dealing with the physical and mental criteria of race.⁵⁶ Whether it was Tylor's skull comparisons or Keane's facial angle measurements, both evolutionists pointed to the modern European as the ultimate standard of measurement for superior intellectual capacities.⁵⁷ To a certain extent, Driver insinuates this racial standard when he shifts into the first-person plural in listing those groups that are obvious physical examples of the differences of race, stating:

We are all familiar with the differences between the Chinaman, the Negro, and ourselves; and there are many other races which, though they may be less familiarly known, are not less markedly distinguished from each other – for instance, the chocolate coloured Australians, the light-brown Maoris, the reddish-brown native tribes of America, the yellow-hued Mongolians of Central Asia and China, the Patagonians, and the diminutive Bushmen of South Africa.⁵⁸

Here, Driver's use of 'we' points to difference as the domain of the racialized Other rather than of his English readership. In this sense the English 'we' represents a norm from which racial comparisons are then what Paul Gilroy terms 'codified and calibrated'.⁵⁹ For Driver, the result is a hierarchical arraignment of the 'most obvious division of mankind', which in his view consists of 'the white Caucasian, the yellow Mongol, the reddish-brown native American, and the black Negro races'.⁶⁰ This racialized grid had its roots in the ethnographic work of Keane, who categorized these racial groups according to four ideal types. In the corresponding footnote, Driver references Keane's book, *Ethnology*, and prompts his readers to see in detail chapter 10, 'The main divisions of the Hominidae' and chapters 11–14, which contain a careful survey of his four racial types. Apart from discovering the origins, migration journeys, languages, and phenotypes of each type, Keane also offers details on their respective innate temperament. As expected, the racial type most predisposed to achieve high levels of development in science, art, and letters is the white Caucasian. In contrast, Keane identifies the other three groups as either undeveloped or moderately developed in the areas of science, art, and letter.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Driver, *Genesis*, xxxvi.

⁵⁶ Driver, *Genesis*, xxxvi.

⁵⁷ Edward Tylor, *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889), 60; A. H. Keane, *Ethnology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1909), 181.

⁵⁸ Driver, *Genesis*, xxxvi.

⁵⁹ Paul Gilroy, 'The Crisis of "Race" and Raciology', in *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2000), 36.

⁶⁰ Driver, *Genesis*, xxxvi.

⁶¹ Keane, *Ethnology*, 227–8.

4 Geographical starting points for white humanity

As mentioned above, Driver's anthropology of race functions more as an excursus in his Genesis commentary in large part because he saw differences of race as an undiscovered fact for the biblical writers.⁶² As he writes, 'the antiquity of man, and the wide distribution of man, with strongly marked racial differences, are two great outstanding facts, which the Biblical narrative, – whether here or elsewhere in Genesis, – not only fails to account for, but does not even leave room for.'⁶³ In calling his readers' attention to the absence of race in Genesis, Driver consequently reveals the subjective contours of his ostensibly objective hermeneutic. Race not only defined Driver's point of entry into the biblical text but rather it served as what he believed to be the necessary optic for understanding human origins. Yet, as factual as racial differences may have seemed to Driver and his English readers, linking Genesis to Western scientific racial discourse unfolded within a binary logic of Hebrew folklore versus scientific fact, or spiritual lesson versus empirical truth. At issue here is not that difference is absent from nature but that a fact of nature is a racial hierarchy of differences in which white humanity remains at the apex.

In his commentary on the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, Driver is preoccupied with the lack of racial specificity in the biblical text, so much so that he offers numerous scientific supplements to satisfy his readership's curiosity. Appealing to comparative philology, Orientalist archaeology, evolutionist racial anthropology, and the Aryan myth, Driver ascribes the Noachian genealogy to white humanity, stating that 'Gen x with the single exception of Cush (Jer. xiii. 23) and, possibly, of Magog (if by this are meant the Seythians) enumerates only tribes and nations belonging to the white race.'⁶⁴ As he explains, the distinctions between Noah's sons were different white racial types, which he identifies as Semites, Aryans, 'Hittites' or Mongolians, and Egyptians. He points out that the other black races of Africa, many nations of Europe, the Indian races, the Chinese, and the peoples of Australia, America, and the Pacific Isles were not mentioned because they were unknown to the ancient Hebrews.⁶⁵ This was a clear departure from the classical tripartite division between the Hamite or 'Egyptian' race, the Semitic or 'Syro-Arabian' race, and the Japhetic or 'Aryan' race.⁶⁶ Driver's subtext draws upon concepts rooted in a scientific version of Western Europe's Aryan myth in which white Europeans located their origin within a Eurasian and Western Asian context first on linguistic grounds.⁶⁷ By the end of the nineteenth century, the term 'Aryan' as an Indo-European language (i.e. Sanskrit) was also used to define the European race.⁶⁸ For Driver's commentary, the term 'Aryan' functions more in the latter sense in that it represents a white racial type with first a particular physiognomy, which resulted

⁶² Driver, *Genesis*, 134.

⁶³ Driver, *Genesis*, 134.

⁶⁴ Driver, *Genesis*, 134.

⁶⁵ Driver, *Genesis*, 113.

⁶⁶ Léon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, trans. Edmund Howard (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 211.

⁶⁷ Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 197.

⁶⁸ Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, 213–14; Keane, *Ethnology*, 395–6.

in the creation of a distinct language. In mapping the Noachian genealogy in Genesis 10, which he argues denoted primarily a geographical arrangement, Driver situates Japhet's descendants in the northern zone, Shem's descendants in the middle zone, and Ham's descendants in the southern zone. Combined, these three zones encompassed a vast geographical area from Armenia in the north to Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia in the south and from Elam in the east to Greece and the dimly known Tarshish in the west.⁶⁹ Following closely Sayce's analysis of Genesis 10, Driver moves through each name in the genealogy, arranging them according to zone and when possible deciphering their particular white racial affiliation. For instance, Driver ascribes Japhet's son Madai to the Medes, who as he argues are 'often mentioned in the OT. From the 8th century B.C. (2 K. xvii. 6, xviii. 11, Is. xxi. 2, xiii. 17 f., *al*); and in the Assyrian Inscriptions from the time of Rammân-nirâri (812–783 B.C.) onwards . . . The home of the Medes was in the mountainous country E. of Assyria, and SW. of the Caspian Sea.'⁷⁰ Here the Medes belonged to the Japhetic zone, which according to Sayce corresponded to 'the Aryan people who claimed relationship to the Aryans of Northern India and the Aryan populations of Europe, and one of the tribes belonging to them was that of the Persians, who had established themselves further south, on the eastern shores of the Persian Gulf.'⁷¹ In Driver's assessment, the contrasts between the Mongolian, Aryan, and Semitic white racial types lie in their respective physiognomies and languages. In his description of Ham's grandson Heth, Driver is unclear as to whether this name referred to the great Hittite nation north of Palestine or offshoots of the Hittites. Yet with high certainty Driver offers a description of the Hittites' racial type using archaeological evidence. As he describes, 'the Hittites, as depicted on their monuments, have a striking physiognomy and dress: a retreating forehead and chin, full lips, large nose, high cheekbones, and the hair plaited behind in three pig tails, the type being that of the Mongol, very unlike either the Semitic or the Aryan type.'⁷² I think it is important to reiterate how in this instance Driver used disinterred objects to support his argument about racial difference. Part of the science that legitimated the possession of ancient artefacts in the modern era was a racialized gaze for inspecting and codifying ancient material culture. Yet from a counter-reading, this mode of scientific inspection anachronistically reinscribed a Western scale of inferiority–superiority onto disinterred ancient objects. Hence these museum objects were in part valued based on their newly discovered racial currency, especially those objects that corroborated European superiority.⁷³

Under the sons of Shem, Driver locates Elam in the middle zone; however, in terms of racial type he states that 'the Elamites were entirely distinct from the Semites, their language, for instance being agglutinative and belonging to a different family.'⁷⁴ As

⁶⁹ Driver, *Genesis*, 113.

⁷⁰ Driver, *Genesis*, 115; see also A. H. Sayce, *The Races of the Old Testament* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1925), 45.

⁷¹ Sayce, *Races of the Old Testament*, 45–6.

⁷² Driver, *Genesis*, 125.

⁷³ See Debbie Challis, *The Archaeology of Race: The Eugenic Ideas of Francis Galton and Flinders Petrie* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Neil Asher, 'Petrie's Head: Eugenic and Near Eastern Archaeology', in *Assembling the Past: Studies in the Professionalization of Archaeology*, ed. Alice B. Kehoe and Mary Beth Emmerichs (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 69–79.

⁷⁴ Driver, *Genesis*, 128.

for Elam's brother Asshur, Driver rightly assigned him to the Assyrians; yet in terms of their racial variety, he states, 'The Assyrians were a Semitic people, their language belonging obviously to the same family as Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Arabic, and Ethiopic.'⁷⁵ Deciphering racial differences in the history of human origins was also applied to the reading of ancient languages. This form of racial logic not only invigorated Western comparative philology but also accredited a racial currency to newly discovered inscriptions in much the same way as with reliefs and the racialized reading of physiognomies. In the end, the implied standard of measurement for varying physiognomies and resulting languages was the Aryan racial/linguistic type, which for Driver was the Europeans' ancestor.⁷⁶

Proceeding to Genesis 11, Driver takes up again a racialized reading of the origin of different languages found in the Tower of Babel narrative (vv. 1–9). As with his reading of Genesis 10, his appeal to race comes from the narrative's disconnect with Western scientific explanations of the diversity of languages and the natural dispersion of humankind. In his words, 'The narrative, while explaining ostensibly the diversity of languages, offers no explanation of the diversity of races.'⁷⁷ In understanding the origin of different languages, Driver prompts his readers to move away from the biblical notion of a common linguistic origin for humanity to the more likely explanation of the differences of race. Here, Driver departs from Sayce's argument on the origin of different languages by privileging race and not society as the cause of the diversity of languages.⁷⁸ As he argues, 'it is of course true that cases occur in which a people brought into contact with a people of another race have adopted their language; but, speaking generally, radically different languages are characteristic of different races.'⁷⁹ Thus, a language's attending grammar, structure, and roots point to the persistence of particular cognitive and vocal faculties that vary according to different racial physiognomies.⁸⁰ Similar to Keane's arguments on the relationship between speech and race, Driver views the physical faculties for creating speech as fixed in the different races.⁸¹ As he explains, 'the great races into which mankind is divided must have migrated into their present homes, and had their existing character stamped upon them, at an age vastly earlier than that which the chronology of Genesis permits.'⁸² Ultimately, Driver's anthropology of race brought more than scientific prestige to his form of Higher Criticism; it laid forth a racialized vision of human history and the biblical text that privileged a hermeneutic of difference from a fixed Western European position of superiority. Indicative of the ongoing acceptance of this vision is the long shelf life Driver's 1904 commentary on Genesis had during the twentieth century: its final (fifteenth) edition was published in 1948.

⁷⁵ Driver, *Genesis*, 131.

⁷⁶ S. R. Driver, 'The Ideals of the Prophet', in *Sermons on Subjects Connected with the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner Son's, 1892), 53.

⁷⁷ Driver, *Genesis*, 133.

⁷⁸ Sayce, *Science of Language*, 1:75; 2:31, 333.

⁷⁹ Driver, *Genesis*, 133.

⁸⁰ Driver, *Genesis*, 133; Sayce, *Science of Language*, 2:23–74; Keane, *Ethnology*, 196–204.

⁸¹ Keane, *Ethnology*, 196–204.

⁸² Driver, *Genesis*, 134.

5 Conclusion

In contextualizing S. R. Driver, I realize that he was a product of his time. I also do not take lightly nor completely reject his contributions to biblical criticism in general, like his definition of the nature of Hebrew prophecy or his attention to the human element behind the biblical text. Take, for instance, these words by Driver, ‘The prophet speaks always, in the first instance, to his own contemporaries: the message which he brings is intimately related with the circumstances of his time’, or these words, ‘There is a human factor in the Bible, which, though quickened and sustained by the informing Spirit, is never wholly absorbed or neutralized by it.’⁸³ What I am concerned about, however, involves an ethics of interpretation and epistemological vigilance. In a world in which racism and white supremacy are on the rise, to what extent does modern biblical criticism have something to do with these realities? Does a racializing gaze or attention to race inevitably reinscribe oppressive racial notions of human bodies? Perhaps the first ethical step is to address critically the economic and ideological forces that allow for a modern racial logic to be recycled within contemporary biblical scholarship. Here, economies of professionalization and truth-making still point to the white European male as the default authority in contemporary biblical criticism. Indeed, addressing this trend begins at the educational level in which students of Bible learn not only how to exegete a text, but more importantly how to exegete the biblical critic. Guided in this way, students contextualize the biblical critic – indexing precisely the critic’s social location. With a clear sense of social location, students can then move to a critical analysis of the critic’s scholarly production. For this phase, students scrutinize the truth-claims of the biblical critic in order to register the political, racial, and ideological contours subtending his/her arguments. This is where the biblical critic’s social location can be insightful to the extent that racializing ‘truth-claims’ about human beings are seen as part of a broader socialization process operating in and around the biblical critic. As the above analysis has shown, Driver’s interpretation of racial differences in Genesis was invariably shaped by his social location and epistemological formation. On a meta-level, Driver’s social location influenced him to view Europeans (in particular Aryans) as the superior race – citing as evidence their intellectual capacities, scientific innovations, language, and most certainly their colonial triumphs. Applying this racial logic to a culturally iconic text like Genesis allowed for its replication within religious domains and schools of higher learning. As such, Driver’s scholarship proceeds as an authority within these domains of influence, allowing his notions of racial differences to go unchecked and eventually be rendered unseen in contemporary biblical criticism.

References

- Aglionby, Francis Keyes. *The Life of Edward Henry Bickersteth D.D.: Bishop and Poet*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1907.

⁸³ Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 224–5.

- Anon. 'Church Notes'. *The Church of England Pulpit, and Ecclesiastical Review* 38, no. 967 (July–December 1894): 188–9.
- Anon. 'Father Ignatius in Cardiff'. *The Tablet* 83 (11 August 1894): 15.
- Anon. 'Loigny, 1894'. *The Church of England Pulpit, and Ecclesiastical Review* 38, no. 967 (18 August 1894): 78–9.
- Anon. 'Professor Driver's Paper at Southwell'. *The Guardian* (28 November 1888): 1810.
- Anon. 'The Religious World'. *The Outlook: A Family Paper* 48, no. 19 (4 November 1893): 815–16.
- Anon. 'Summaries'. *The Church Eclectic: An Anglo-Catholic Magazine of Church Literature with Notes and Summaries* 21, no. 7 (October 1893): 663–72.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Homo Academicus*, translated by Peter Collier. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988.
- de Bertouch, Beatrice. *The Life of Father Ignatius O.S.B.: The Monk of Llanthony*. London: Methuen & Co., 1904.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'The Old-Testament in Light of To-Day'. *The Expositor*, 6th ser., 3 (1875): 27–49.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'The Cosmogony of Genesis'. *The Expositor* 3, no. 3 (January 1886): 23–45.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. *Isaiah: His Life and Times and the Writings Which Bear His Name*. New York: Anson D.F. Randolph & Company, 1888.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'The Critical Study of the Old Testament'. *Contemporary Review* 57 (February 1890): 215–31.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'Evolution Compatible with Faith'. In *Sermons on Subjects Connected with the Old Testament*, 1–27. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'The Ideals of the Prophet'. In *Sermons on Subjects Connected with the Old Testament*, 50–71. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. Letter to Dr. George Ridding, Bishop of Southwell (dated 10 October 1892), MS ENG LETT c.31, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'The Moral and Devotional Value of the Old Testament'. *The Expository Times* 4, no. 3 (December 1892): 110–13.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'Archeology and the Old Testament'. *The Contemporary Review* 65 (January–June 1894): 408–26.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'The Growth of the Old Testament'. In *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Exeter*, edited by C. Dunkley, 64–69. London: Bemrose & Sons, 1894.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'Hebrew Authority'. In *Authority and Archeology: Sacred and Profane*, edited by David G. Hogarth, 1–52. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. 'Confusion of Tongues'. In *A Dictionary of the Bible, Dealing with its Language, Literature, and Contents, Including the Biblical Theology*. Vol. IV: *Pleroma-Zuzim*, edited by James Hastings, 790–93. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. *The Book of Genesis*. London: Methuen & Co., 1904.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.
- Dunkley, Charles, ed. *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Birmingham*. London: Bemrose & Sons, 1893.
- Dunkley, Charles, ed. *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Exeter*. London: Bemrose & Sons, 1894.
- Gilroy, Paul. 'The Crisis of "Race" and Raciology'. In *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, 11–53. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2000.

- Keane, Augustus Henry. *Ethnology*. Cambridge: University Press, 1909.
- Poliakov, Léon. *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, translated by Edmonds Howard. New York: Basic Books, 1974.
- Reynolds, Herbert Edward. *A Short History of the Ancient Diocese of Exeter: From the Conquest to the Church Congress of 1894*. Cambridge: H. Besley & Son, 1895.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. 2nd edn. New York: Random House, 1994.
- Sandford, C. Waldergrave. 'The Grounds of Our Belief in the Divine Origin and Authority of the Holy Scriptures'. In *The Official Report of the Church Congress Held at Exeter*, edited by C. Dunkley, 59–64. London: Bemrose & Sons, 1894.
- Sayce, Archibald Henry. *Introduction to the Science of Language*. 2 volumes. London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1880.
- Sayce, Archibald Henry. *The 'Higher Criticism' and the Verdict of the Monuments*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1910.
- Sayce, Archibald Henry. *The Races of the Old Testament*. London: The Religious Tract Society, 1925.
- Tylor, Edward. *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889.