

Nathaniel Schmidt

May 22, 1862 — June 29, 1939

Nathaniel Schmidt was born in Hudiksvall, Sweden, on May 22, 1862. In 1884, after spending two years at the University of Stockholm, he came to the United States and until 1887 he was a student at Colgate (then Madison) University. After a further year of study at the University of Berlin, he was appointed professor of Semitic Languages and Literatures at Colgate. In 1896 he was called to the chair of Semitic Languages and Literatures and of Oriental History in Cornell University and, save for two years (1904-5) when he was director of the American School of Archeology in Jersualem, he taught continuously here until his retirement with the rank of professor emeritus in 1932. Successive generations of students who attended his classes in the Literature of the Old Testament or his survey courses on the History of Asia and of Africa have borne witness to his learning, his great gifts as a teacher, and his integrity as a man and a scholar. Throughout his life, from his first book, *An Introduction to the Hexateuch*, published in 1896, to his last, *The Coming Religion*, which appeared in 1932, Professor Schmidt by his writings contributed constantly and with unflagging power to the advancement of scholarship. Besides a number of books, of which the most important were his *Prophet of Nazareth*, which reached a second edition in 1907, and his study of the Arabian historian, Ibn Khaldun, issued in 1930, he was the author of numerous contributions to theological and oriental journals and composed some 1,500 articles in the *New International Encyclopaedia*. He served as head of the American School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, as president of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, and as trustee of the schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem and Baghdad.

Endowed with a remarkable gift of languages and with a knowledge that was encyclopedic in its range, he was yet the most modest of men and unfailingly generous of time and counsel alike to his colleagues and to his students. He took an active and weighty part in the affairs of our academic life and of the many learned societies of which he was a valued member. To a wider public he was known for many years as a persuasive and eloquent speaker on the religious and social problems of our time and as a fearless advocate, unswayed by the pressure of vulgar opinion, of what he believed to be the truth. His many friends will deeply mourn the death of one whose life exemplified the words:

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.”