

Studies in Texts :

SUGGESTIONS FOR SERMONS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

BY REV. HARRINGTON C. LEES, M.A.

II.—DIVINE ACTION AND HUMAN AGENCY.

Text :—“Written with the finger of God.”—EXOD. xxxi. 18.

[Book of the Month : “ARCHÆOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT”¹
= A. Other references : Naville’s “Book of the Law” = B.L. ;
Lodge’s “Man and the Universe” = M.U.]

STUDY of texts involved (Exod. xxxi. 18, xxxii. 15, 19, xxxiv. 1, 4, 28 ; Deut. iv. 13, 14, v. 22, ix. 10, 11, 17, x. 2, 3, 4) shows co-operation of God and Moses. Naville explains “God’s writing” as sacred script (like Egyptian hieroglyphs) : “before Solomon all religious books (in Israel) written in Babylonian cuneiform” (A. 29). “This the sacred writing in Exod. xxxii. 16” (A. 17). Contrast secular writing Isa. viii. 1, R.V.M. (A. 18). “Pen of man” = popular, “finger of God” = sacred, script (A. 19). If so, we have—

I. A CONTRADICTION RECONCILED. — Exod. xxxiv. 28, Deut. x. 4, now seen to mean same thing. God breathed, Moses graved in sacred characters, known as God’s writing (*cf.* 2 Pet. i. 21). See Gospel evidence for Holy Spirit as God’s finger (Luke xi. 20 = Matt. xii. 28).

II. A DIFFICULTY EXPLAINED.—2 Chron. xxxiv. 15 says book of law discovered in Moses’ handwriting (see LXX). Naville explains this as “writing of Moses’ day”—*i.e.*, cuneiform—hence Shaphan asked to decipher (B.L. 32). “Solomon did what Assyrian kings often did : hid in wall, as foundation deposit, a cuneiform tablet of law of Moses” (A. 129). “Why should not Moses’ tablets have been preserved as much as Hammurabi’s code ?” (A. 36).

¹ By Édouard Naville, D.C.L., LL.D., F.S.A., etc. Robert Scott. Price 5s. “A very remarkable book” (Professor Sayce).

III. A LESSON SUGGESTED.—Operations of God's hands not less Divine because He uses human agents (*cf.* Isa. v. 12, 13). "We are artisans of the Creator, and a magnificent co-operation is our highest privilege" (M.U. 126). Moses' staff the rod of God (Exod. iv. 2, 20). Stretches out hand, wind blows, Israel saved, work God's (Exod. xiv. 21, 26, 31; *cf.* xiv. 26 with xv. 6, 12). So Exod. viii. 17, 19: Aaron's hand, God's finger. Moses' graving tool, God's finger (xxx. 18). "May we not be looking at action of Manager all the time? Look for action of the Deity, if at all, then always" (M.U. 33).



The Missionary World.

THE place of international relations in missionary thought is gradually widening. At a recent conference held in connection with one Missionary Society, a lecture was given on "The Sending Centres of the Christian Church." The aim of the lecturer was to reveal to those closely associated with one "sending centre" the great mass of similar work being done in other Churches and other lands, and to produce a sense of brotherhood. The "Christian Church" was interpreted in the widest sense; it was urged that a Church with life and a message must send forth, and that if the whole Church were to share in the "sending," there must be recognized foci for the work. A "sending centre" was defined not as the Mission House and its committees and officials, but as the whole linked membership of the Society.

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Three passages—St. John xx. 19-23; Acts xiii. 1-4, xiv. 25-27—indicating the earliest "sending centres" of the Christian Church, were shown to contain, beneath temporary circumstances, the permanent essentials of the Presence of Jesus, the Call of the Spirit, the confirming Grace of God. Then the