

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

WHEN we have the opportunity of looking back upon a hot controversy of years gone by, we are often struck with the smallness of the issue upon which it turned. In the year 1890 a grand duel took place in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century* between Mr. Gladstone and Professor Huxley. The subject was supposed to be the Supernatural in the Gospels. With his unexampled adroitness, however, Professor Huxley persuaded us to stake the existence of the Supernatural in the Gospels upon a single miracle. He chose the miracle, and nicknamed it the 'Gadarene Pig Affair.' The idea in Professor Huxley's mind seemed to be that the miracles of the New Testament were like links of a chain. Break the smallest link and the chain is useless. The 'Gadarene Pig Affair' was not only the smallest link but the easiest link to hammer at.

But as the controversy proceeded the issue became still narrower. It turned finally and for a long time upon the question whether the people of Gadara were Jews or not. If they were Jews, then, said Mr. Gladstone, they had no business to be keeping swine. But, said Professor Huxley, they were not Jews; in destroying the swine Jesus destroyed their lawful property, and 'everything that I know of law and justice convinces me that the wanton destruction of other people's property is

a misdemeanour of evil example.' So he held up Mr. Gladstone triumphantly on the horns of a dilemma. Either the 'Gadarene Pig Affair' never occurred, or, if it did, the example of Jesus was an evil example.

It was a hot controversy. On one side at least it was fought with utmost earnestness. But it was all in the air. Whether the Gadarenes were Jews or Gentiles is not of the slightest consequence, since it is certain that wherever the miracle occurred it did not take place at Gadara.

How could they think it took place at Gadara? Gadara is six or seven miles from the Sea of Galilee. Did the pigs run all these miles before they made their final plunge down the 'steep place' into the sea? To Professor Huxley a miracle was a marvel; an additional wonder like that only made it more miraculous. But how could Mr. Gladstone agree to it?

The miracle did not occur at Gadara. It occurred at a place right above the sea. Its ruins are there still. They go by the name of *Kersa*. The evidence is of various kinds. It is textual, topographical, historical. It is gathered together and 'weighed with the strictest objectivity' by Professor Sanday in his new book, *Sacred Sites of the Gospels*.

Professor Sanday says: 'As one looks across the lake from Tiberias, the eastern side appears to be formed by a single mountain wall, averaging some 1500 feet in height, with a few clefts in it, where ravines come down to the sea. Of these ravines the most considerable is the Wâdy Semak, a little north of midway up the side. At the mouth of this ravine I had pointed out to me a tiny patch darker in colour than its surroundings. These are the ruins of *Khera* or *Kersa*. I have practically no doubt that these ruins mark the place which gave its name to the miracle.'

The evidence is short and convincing. There are three readings in the MSS. The best attested reading in St. Matthew is Gadarenes. But the true reading in St. Mark (5<sup>1</sup>) is Gerasenes. Gerasenes is also the best reading in St. Luke (8<sup>26. 37</sup>), though an important group of MSS has Gergesenes. Thus the oldest and only reliable name is either Gerasenes or Gergesenes. These words are both attempts to represent the adjective corresponding to *Kersa*. Gadarenes arose from some gloss. Very likely an early scribe, knowing only the Gerasa away in the Decapolis, and seeing that that city, some thirty miles from the sea, was impossible, inserted Gadara as at least nearer.

With the textual evidence agrees the historical and the topographical. Origen knew the place Gerasa in his day, though he thought it should be written Gergesa. And when Thomson of the *Land and the Book* rediscovered it, the name had never been forgotten. '*Kerza* or *Gersa*,' he says, 'my Bedawin guide shouted it in my ear the first time I visited it.' It is the only place that is possible. Not only are there tombs near at hand, but here alone is there a cliff that falls sheer almost into the lake.

The subject of the keenest controversy at the present moment is the Virgin-birth of our Lord. The weekly papers are full of it. The monthly magazines have nearly all an article on it. This

month five books have come into our hands wholly occupied with it.

The first book is Canon Hensley Henson's *Sincerity and Subscription* (Macmillan; 1s. net). The question is, What are men to do who wish to take Orders but cannot say 'I believe in . . . born of a virgin'? When this question, with others like it, came urgently before the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, a few years ago, a Declaratory Act was passed. The Declaratory Act permitted men who had difficulties to say they believed these things *in a certain sense*. The Church of England has not, we suppose, the power to pass a Declaratory Act. But Canon Hensley Henson says to the men who have difficulties, Pass a Declaratory Act for yourself: say to yourself 'I believe in . . . born of a virgin *in a certain sense*.'

These are not Canon Hensley Henson's very words. But that is their meaning. His very words are: 'I may observe generally that it is now admitted by all fair-minded persons that the language of the Anglican formularies cannot in all cases be pressed in an exact or literal sense. The "general assent" to the Thirty-nine Articles is admittedly compatible with a particular repudiation of a good many of them.'

As to the Virgin-birth itself, Canon Hensley Henson plainly does not believe in it. He says that the evidence in the New Testament in favour of it is 'far less conclusive than is ordinarily assumed to be the case.' The two birth-narratives disagree formidably. One of them says that the angels appeared in a dream; it is 'no very violent procedure to assume' that all the angelic approaches were in dreams. And he thinks that if they were in dreams the situation is greatly altered.

The evangelists themselves understood that our Lord was born of a Virgin. Canon Hensley Henson does not deny that. But 'it is now very generally admitted by divines of unquestioned orthodoxy that we may understand the evangelical narratives

otherwise than the evangelists themselves understood them.' He quotes the example of Christ's Temptation. The author of St. Matthew's Gospel clearly thinks of three distinct visible scenes; but 'that admirable expositor, the late Dr. Latham, held the narrative to have been a representation of our Lord's inward conflicts, clothed by Him in a garb of outward imagery, that they might be the better understood.'

Dr. Sanday thinks the narrative is ultimately traceable to the Virgin herself, in all probability through the little circle of women who were for some time in her company. Canon Hensley Henson says that 'dreams or intuitions or mental conflicts related at second hand by devout women, the best informed in the world, are no very secure basis for an immense affirmation.'

Finally, Canon Hensley Henson states that the whole case for the Virgin-birth rests on St Luke. Critics 'seem agreed in attaching comparatively little weight' to the narrative in St. Matthew, and 'there is nothing in the rest of the New Testament to suggest anything abnormal in Christ's birth, and much to suggest the opposite.'

There are therefore four things which it seems very astonishing to Canon Hensley Henson that any one should deny: (1) the legitimacy of doubt as to the Virgin-birth; (2) the compatibility of such doubt with a genuine belief in the Incarnation; (3) the proper separableness of the Incarnation from any specific theory as to its mode, however ancient and attractive; and (4) the obligation of honest men not to affirm as fact more than the evidences adduced seem to them to allow. And when the honest man asks what his own private Declaratory Act is to make the clause in the Creed, 'born of the Virgin Mary,' mean, Canon Hensley Henson answers, Make it mean neither more nor less than St. Paul's phrases, 'born of the seed of David according to the flesh'; 'born of a woman.'

Let the second book be American. It is the

first of a series of 'Historical and Linguistic Studies in literature related to the New Testament' which the Department of Biblical and Patristic Greek of the University of Chicago purposes to issue. The title is *The Virgin-Birth* (University of Chicago Press; 50 c.). The author is Dr. Allan Hoben.

It is well to take Dr. Hoben second, because Canon Hensley Henson is a trifle unsettling. Not that Dr. Hoben is orthodox and apologetic. It is impossible to say what he is or believes. His business, he says, is to tell us what we have to go upon in believing or disbelieving the Virgin-birth of our Lord, not what he himself believes or disbelieves. What we have to go upon—after Canon Hensley Henson, that is what we need to know. Dr. Hoben takes us first to the New Testament, next to the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and then to the New Testament Apocrypha.

He takes us to the New Testament first. In the New Testament the only references to the Virgin-birth are in the beginning of St. Matthew's and of St. Luke's Gospels. Dr. Hoben does not believe that any other writer of the New Testament had ever heard of the Virgin-birth. On that he is so clear and exhaustive that we had better quote his words: 'There is no trace of it in Peter's preaching, as preserved to us; and Paul, though it would seem that he could have made occasional good use of the teaching (the reference is to 1 Co 15<sup>45ff.</sup>, 2 Co 5<sup>21</sup>, Ro 5<sup>12ff.</sup> 8<sup>3</sup>, Phil 2<sup>6ff.</sup> *et al.*), preserves a significant silence; Matthew's Gospel, from 3<sup>1</sup> onward, depending upon Mark, is also silent; and that portion of the Gospel of Luke, which, as we judge from 1<sup>2</sup> and Ac 1<sup>21, 22</sup>, constituted for him the Gospel proper, viz. that which began, like Mark, with the public ministry of Jesus as inaugurated by John the Baptist, is likewise destitute of any trace of the Virgin-birth story. The Gospel of John is also silent.'

We are thrown back, then, upon the first two chapters in St. Matthew, and the first two chapters in St. Luke. How are they related to one another?

Canon Henson says, a trifle airily, that the whole burden of proof depends upon St. Luke. He means that we are not so sure about the authorship and date of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. But St. Matthew's Gospel is there, and it has its birth-narrative as well as St. Luke. Is it derived from St. Luke? Or are both taken from some common source? Or are they independent?

Dr. Hoben believes that they are independent. And certainly he has little difficulty in exhibiting the general independence of the first two chapters in St. Matthew from the first two chapters in St. Luke. The genealogies, which come first, are glaringly independent. St. Luke alone has the generations from Adam to Abraham. But between Abraham and David they will surely agree, for both have the same Old Testament material to work upon. They do not agree. Only one name in each can be identified, and that doubtfully. While to explain and say that St. Luke gives the genealogy of Mary does not help the matter, and is probably not true.

As for the rest of the narratives, their utter independence is seen at a glance by a parallel arrangement—

MATTHEW.	LUKE.
	Birth of John the Baptist, 1 <sup>5-25</sup> .
Annunciation to Joseph, 1 <sup>18-21</sup> .	Annunciation to Mary, 1 <sup>20-38</sup> .
	Mary's visit to Elisabeth, 1 <sup>39-56</sup> .
	Birth of John the Baptist, 1 <sup>57-80</sup> .
	Birth of Jesus, 2 <sup>1-7</sup> .
	The Angels and the Shepherds, 2 <sup>8-20</sup> .
	The Circumcision, 2 <sup>21</sup> .
	Presentation in the Temple, 2 <sup>22-39</sup> .
The Magi, 2 <sup>1-12</sup> .	
Flight into Egypt and Return to Nazareth, 2 <sup>18-23</sup> .	
Childhood at Nazareth, 2 <sup>23</sup> .	Childhood at Nazareth, 2 <sup>39-40</sup> .
	Incident in the Temple, 2 <sup>41-50</sup> .
	Eighteen years at Nazareth, 2 <sup>51-52</sup> .

When the portions in each Gospel that specially deal with the Virgin-birth are compared, their independence is not so striking. Still Dr. Hoben believes that they are independent. Both state that Mary was Joseph's betrothed, and that before they came together Mary conceived by the Spirit of God. And that is the all-important matter. But in St. Luke the angel of the annunciation comes to Mary in Nazareth, in St. Matthew to Joseph, presumably in Bethlehem. In St. Luke the promised Son is to rule on the throne of David forever; in St. Matthew He is to save His people from their sins. In St. Luke He is described as 'God's Son,' in St. Matthew He is called 'Immanuel.'

Now, the first question is, Where did these narratives come from? Dr. Hoben does not answer that question. But he does the next thing possible, he shows where they did not come from. Resch holds that they are both taken from a pre-canonical history of the childhood of Jesus. That history, he holds, had been written in Hebrew and translated into Greek. If we had it, he thinks we should be able to harmonize the infancy stories of the first and third Gospels. Resch's theory breaks down over the comparison which Dr. Hoben makes between St. Matthew and St. Luke. The only other suggestion worth considering is Conrady's.

Conrady believes that the infancy stories in our Gospels have come from the apocryphal Gospel of James. St. Matthew and St. Luke both used the Gospel of James, he believes, and then St. Luke used St. Matthew. Well, the Gospel of James is in existence. We can see. Dr. Hoben quotes the whole passage that is relevant. His conclusion is that the Gospel of James is itself nothing but a fanciful and rather prurient working up of the canonical narrative.

There is no other apocryphal source worth suggesting. Even the Ante-Nicene Fathers have nothing to work upon outside the narratives in the New Testament, until we come to Clement of

Alexandria. Clement looks favourably upon some extra-canonical material, which the Fathers who were before him knew of but had no faith in. Origen looks still more favourably upon it. Hippolytus at last accepts it out and out. But what is this material? It is nothing but the already discredited Gospel of James. For the account of the birth of Christ by a Virgin we are absolutely confined to the first two chapters of St. Matthew and the first two chapters of St. Luke.

But in the New Testament and in the Fathers there is another account of the birth of Christ. It is the account, apparently the only account, with which St. Peter and St. Paul were acquainted. It is the account that is known to the author of the Fourth Gospel. It is found in the Prologue to that Gospel.

Dr. Hoben seems to believe that these two accounts of the birth of Christ are independent and irreconcilable. The one account represents Jesus as born of a Virgin through the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit, whereby His sinlessness, and probably also His divinity, are secured. It says nothing of pre-existence, and does not seem to know it. The other knows nothing of a Virgin. The birth is apparently an ordinary birth—'made flesh,' 'born of a woman.' The divinity and the sinlessness are secured by His pre-existence. He who was 'made flesh' was the Word, was with God, was God; He who was 'born of a woman' was before that 'in the form of God.'

Outside the first two chapters of St. Matthew and the first two chapters of St. Luke, the only way known to the New Testament of Christ's coming into the world was by Incarnation from pre-existent Godhead. Even the early Fathers know no other way. Ignatius of Antioch (martyred between 107 and 117 A.D.) is the only *Apostolic* Father who mentions the Virgin-birth. And when at last the Ante-Nicene Fathers take it into account, and endeavour to reconcile it with the other, their

reasoning and their theology seem to suffer. Tertullian seeks to harmonize the Pre-existence and the Virgin-birth by representing the Spirit of God as bringing to Mary at the time of her conception the already existent Word, who then dwelt within her, and from her received His human flesh. Archelaus goes so far as to hold that in entering the womb of the Virgin the eternal Word dropped His divinity, and was thenceforth merely human until the Spirit descended upon Him at His baptism.

Well, then, what we find in Dr. Hoben is that the birth from a Virgin and the incarnation from Pre-existence are independent and apparently irreconcilable ways of explaining the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. Both preserve, and may have been written to preserve, His sinlessness and His divinity. The Virgin-birth is unknown in the New Testament outside the beginning of the First and Third Gospels. It is unknown also to the Apostolic Fathers, with the single exception of Ignatius. Of its source and origin Dr. Hoben has nothing to say.

The third book has been written by the Dean of Westminster.

Last Advent the Dean of Westminster delivered three lectures in Westminster Abbey on the Incarnation. He did not mean to publish them. For, though he had considered the subject not a little in the past, the lectures themselves were rapidly written, and he thought they did not deserve the dignity of a book. But meantime the disturbance of men's minds about the Virgin-birth of our Lord was increasing. The clergy of the Church of England were getting anxious. And now, what were they doing? They were urging the bishops to make an authoritative pronouncement on the subject. One of their own number, the Dean of Ripon, had started the inquiry. He himself seemed to be in doubt, if not about the Virgin-birth, then about the necessity for believing it. Let the bishops, they demanded, say publicly and

authoritatively that the Virgin-birth is a cardinal doctrine of the Christian Faith.

Then the Dean of Westminster determined to publish his three lectures. They might not be the best defence of the doctrine he could make, but the occasion was urgent. They would perhaps allay the uneasiness in some men's minds; and they would give him an opportunity of addressing an open letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and urging him not to listen to the demand for an episcopal pronouncement. He calls his book *Some Thoughts on the Incarnation* (Macmillan; rs. 6d. net).

The Dean of Westminster feels that the occasion is urgent. 'No one will dispute,' he says, 'that in the minds of thoughtful men there is a very serious disquietude in regard to the doctrine of the Virgin-birth. It is only necessary to ask any doctor, any student of natural science, or any man who interests himself in scientific inquiries and their apparent conclusions, and endeavours to frame for himself a reasonable interpretation of the problems of life—to ask him not only what he himself thinks and feels, but what other men of his profession or class are saying to him, in order to discover that there is a real unsettlement of their minds in regard to a matter which hardly occurred to their fathers as a subject of inquiry.'

Dr. Armitage Robinson thinks that there are two causes of this disquietude. The first cause is the spread of the scientific temper. To men trained in the processes of physical science, miracle is always difficult to take into account. But the miracle of the Virgin-birth has a difficulty that is peculiar to itself. It is not that Parthenogenesis, or birth from virgins, does not occur in humanity. No more does resurrection from the dead. In the case of our Lord's resurrection from the dead, however, one can see some moral fitness or even necessity for it. But there is not the same moral necessity for the Virgin-birth. One can at least conceive that the union between God and man, or whatever

the Virgin-birth was intended to effect, might have been effected in some other way.

The other cause is the Lower Criticism. It has become generally known that the Virgin-birth is not taken account of by either St. Paul or St. John, the two writers from whom above all we receive the doctrine of the Incarnation; that it is not mentioned in the earliest Gospel; that its record is confined to the beginning of the First and Third Gospels; that the First Gospel has less historical weight attached to it than the Third; that finally, in the words of Canon Hensley Henson, 'the burden of proof depends upon St. Luke'; and they begin to wonder whether, after all, the tradition may not be an aftergrowth.

That is the situation. It will not be denied that the Dean of Westminster realizes the nature and the gravity of it. How does he deal with it? Not by an ecclesiastical pronouncement. The day for that seems to be past. Nor yet by a page of prejudging apologetics. The audience is unfit for that. He simply states the case. He examines the evidence for and against. For 'it is a *fundamental principle*,' he says, 'that criticism must be met by criticism, and not by counter-assertion.' In sympathy with the scientific mind, and in a temper that is itself scientific, he inquires whether it is easier to disbelieve the Virgin-birth of our Lord or to believe it.

He concludes that for himself at least, with his scientific training and his scientific sympathies, it is easier to believe it. For one thing, the Church has believed it from the beginning. That fact does not carry weight with everybody. But there is something in it for everybody. Dr. Armitage Robinson believes that the Church is the Body of Christ, and that the Holy Spirit is promised to guide the Church into the truth about Christ. But even those who believe only in a general providence, offering men the opportunity of getting at the truth if they desire, must find it hard to conceive that throughout all its generations, and on all its most sacred occasions, the Church of Christ has

been allowed to believe and repeat what is only a figment of superstitious imagination, or, as Dr. Robinson bluntly puts it, a lie.

Then there is the historical fact that the early Church did actually accept the narratives of the Virgin-birth which we have in our Gospels as true. How was she led to this mistake at the beginning? If they were no part of the original Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, how were they prefixed to these Gospels, and by whom; and who was it that conceived the story and wrote it out so wonderfully well? Or, if it was in existence before these Gospels were written, how was the painstaking St. Luke, who traced all things accurately from the beginning, deceived with this narrative? 'Can a myth,' asks Dr. Armitage Robinson—'can a myth have grown up and have gained such currency as to deceive St. Luke within forty years of the death of Christ? You must give the story time to develop into the two striking narratives which we possess; you must put it back to a date at which probably the Virgin was still living; and you must further find a ground for its origination.'

A ground for its origination—the unbeliever in the Virgin-birth finds that easily. The purpose was to prove or preserve the sinlessness of Jesus. And there is no doubt that the early Church did use the Virgin-birth for that purpose. But the question is not what was done with the story after it came into existence, the question is why did it come into existence? And it is incredible that it was invented to support the sinlessness of Christ. The sinlessness of Christ was sufficiently preserved by the belief in His pre-existence and His divinity. That was enough for St. Paul. It was enough for the author of the Fourth Gospel. It does not follow that these men had never heard of the Virgin-birth. We cannot tell whether they had heard of it or not, for silence is never conclusive. We know that St. John did not need it to prove Christ's sinlessness, but he may have known it and accepted it simply as part of His miraculous personality and history.

And the Dean of Westminster believes that that is the way to regard the Virgin-birth. It is not a mere wonder. It is not an isolated unrelated marvel. If it is a miracle, it is a miracle in keeping with the miraculous person of Jesus of Nazareth. If it is a miracle, it is part of a greater miracle than itself. To accept the Incarnation and deny the Virgin-birth seems to the Dean of Westminster unscientific.

For Dr. Armitage Robinson, who agrees with Dr. Hoben in everything else, sees no contradiction between the Incarnation and the Virgin-birth. To him the Virgin-birth is simply the way in which the Incarnation was effected. It may be that the early Fathers, in seeking to explain how the pre-existent Son of God passed through the womb of the Virgin to become flesh and dwell among us, were attempting more than they could accomplish. We are not responsible for their mistakes. And if their mistakes are crude and glaring, we only wonder the more that he who invented the story at the first, if it is an invention, was preserved in his harder task from similar mistakes. For us it is enough that He became man, and in becoming man did not disdain the Virgin's womb.

The two books that remain may be taken together. The one is *The Birth of Jesus Christ*, by Dr. Wilhelm Soltau (A. & C. Black; 1s. 6d. net). The other is *The Virgin-Birth of Christ*, by Dr. Paul Lobstein (Williams & Norgate; 3s.). Both authors disbelieve the Virgin-birth. Both books are written to prove it unhistorical.

The more persuasive of the two is Dr. Soltau. Professor Lobstein seeks to preserve the theological value of the Virgin-birth while denying that it has any historical value. And the effort misses fire. Dr. Soltau is the more persuasive, because he simply attempts to prove that the narratives containing it are unhistorical, and then seeks to show how it came into existence. But we ought to say plausible rather than persuasive.

For, in the first place, the case against the narratives is not so strong as Dr. Soltau seems to make it. He is too hardy in his assertions. And, in the second place, his explanation of the origin of the myth, as he calls it, is both self-contradictory and incredible.

It is self-contradictory. He says that the first two chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke were made up partly out of the Old Testament and partly out of heathen mythology. But they could not have come from both. If suggested by the Old Testament, they were written by Jewish Christians; but where were the Jewish Christians who copied the myths of the Greeks and Romans?

And it is incredible. Dr. Soltau has the hardihood to say that the Virgin-birth itself was suggested by the stories that were current about the supernatural birth of the Emperor Augustus. The Christians (he says now that they must have been Gentile Christians) wished to outdo the claims that the Romans made for their emperor, and prove that Christ was more divine.

But the best answer to Dr. Soltau is Dr. Lobstein's book. Dr. Lobstein believes that there are 'striking analogies' between the biblical myth (as he calls the narrative of the Virgin-birth) and certain Greek or Eastern legends. But he does not believe that they had anything to do with its origin. 'The aversion which primitive Christianity felt for polytheistic paganism was so deep-seated that before supposing the new religion to have been influenced by pagan mythologies, we must examine with the utmost possible care the points of resemblance which are sometimes found to exist between beliefs and institutions.' Dr. Lobstein does not believe in the race for supernatural supremacy between our Lord and Augustus.

If there is one passage in the Old Testament more than another that has made the common man a critic, it is the passage which reads, 'And

God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as El Shaddai, but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them' (Ex 6<sup>3</sup>). Has he not already read in Genesis, 'And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh' (22<sup>14</sup>)? Has he not read, 'See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which Jehovah hath blessed' (27<sup>27</sup>, words of Isaac)? And has he not read, 'And behold Jehovah stood above it (above Jacob's ladder), and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac' (28<sup>13</sup>)?

The Rev. W. O. E. Oesterley, B.D., has written an article on this apparent contradiction in *Church and Synagogue* for July. Mr. Oesterley is a critic. He believes that the contradiction is only on the surface. A just measure of criticism will put it right, and the plain man will understand.

Now there is one thing that to Mr. Oesterley is clear. The Israelites who were in Egypt did not know God by the name of Jehovah. This is clear from Ex 3<sup>18</sup> where 'Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them?' Mr. Oesterley's conclusion is that the names 'Abraham,' 'Isaac,' and 'Jacob' do not represent individuals but tribes; that of these tribes some portion knew their God by the name of Jehovah, and some did not; and that the Israelites who went down into Egypt were of the portion who did not.

Who were the tribes that knew God by the name of Jehovah? The Kenites, says Mr. Oesterley. He believes that it was from the Kenites that Moses learned to call God by the name of Jehovah, and under the influence of the Kenites he succeeded in inducing the Israelites in Egypt to accept this new name and worship.

When Moses fled from Egypt he went to Midian.



Why did he go so far? Not because he could not have found shelter nearer, for Oriental hospitality is notorious, but because the Midianites were his kinsfolk. The kinship is expressed in the way that is usual to these early narratives, by saying that Midian was a son of Abraham by his wife Keturah. He went and resided in Midian with Jethro, a priest of Midian, and married Jethro's daughter. Now Jethro belonged to that tribe of the Midianites who went by the name of Kenite.

Mr. Oesterley believes that Moses learned to worship Jehovah in Midian. He was taught both the name and the worship by Jethro, a priest of Midian. But he does not mean that Moses had no revelation. He has no love for the modern spirit that, far from finding every common bush afire with God, removes the fire even from the Burning Bush of history and makes it common. He does not think that his explanation touches the question of divine revelation. For as the nation of Israel was prepared for the revelation in Christ by long previous teaching concerning the Messiah on the part of its prophets, so also Moses may have been trained by Jethro the Kenite for the Burning Bush and the great commission.

But what is the proof that Moses and the Israelites received the knowledge of Jehovah from the Kenites?

There is first the great respect which Moses had for Jethro and his family in the wilderness: 'And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him' (Ex 18<sup>7</sup>). There is the fact that in the worship of Jehovah, Jethro the priest of Midian took precedence of Moses and of Aaron: 'And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron

came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God' (18<sup>12</sup>). And there is the fact that 'Moses hearkened unto the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said.'

Jethro's son, Hobab, succeeded to his father's place and reverence. He entered Canaan with the Israelites, and settled down 'with the people' (Jg 1<sup>10</sup>). Pass on. In the Song of Deborah, Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, is blessed above women for championing the cause of Jehovah (Jg 5<sup>23, 24</sup>). When Jehu began to put down the worship of Baal and restore the worship of Jehovah, Jehonadab, the son of Rechab the Kenite, joined heartily with him; and the prophecy was often repeated in after days, 'Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever' (Jer 35<sup>19</sup>).

It is circumstantial evidence, but Mr. Oesterley believes in it. The last item is the most circumstantial. The God of the Kenites was a god of the hills. Midian was a mountainous district; and so, in Nu 24<sup>21</sup>, it is said of Balaam, 'And he looked on the Kenite, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thy nest is set in the rock.' The God of Israel was also regarded as a god of the hills. Did He not 'come forth' from Mt. Sinai (which was in the heart of the Midianite country)? Did not the servants of the defeated king of Syria say to him (1 K 20<sup>23</sup>), the Israelites' God 'is a god of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we'? And did not the pious Israelite, through all the years of his discipline, sing, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help'?