

lar handbooks of mythology tell us that she was the principal female divinity of the Phœnicians. In the Old Testament we see that Solomon introduced the cult of Ashtoreth from Phœnice, and then the description given us is: 'Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians.' But the cult can be traced to a very remote past in Central Asia. The equivalent of the name can be found as that of a supreme deity in other nations of antiquity: *Istar* in Babylon; *Astarte* among the Greeks; *Atthar* in Moab; *Hathor* in Egypt. In the earlier parts of the Bible we have the plural *Ashteroth*, but this is to designate the great diversity of idols which were made to represent that divinity; there were many Ashteroth, and yet only one Ashtoreth. Even among these Semitic monuments found in Sinai there are two distinct types of Ashteroth—the female figure No. 138 and the Sphinx No. 141. This use of the plural may help us to understand how the Hebrews came to adopt *Elohim*, in the plural, as a divine name while a monotheistic people. Our reading of the six characters finds ample confirmation in the little Sphinx described before, for this dedication 'To Ashtoreth' in Semitic characters, corresponds to the dedication to Hathor in Egyptian hieroglyphs on the other side.

Now above the dedication on figure No. 138 there are four other characters used separately, two on either side, and one above the other. What can they mean? Evidently they are used in their numerical signification: 40, 400, 4, 90. They probably are intended to give the simple astronomical or chronological formula of the Egyptian year, which at first consisted of 360 days without the five epagomenal days subsequently added to it. 40 above 400 means obviously 40 from 400, or 400 - 40, which equals 360; 4 above 90 on the other side means 4 x 90, which equals the same, the year being divided into four equal seasons. It is possible that the two symbols Γ Γ immediately above indicate this subtraction and multiplication.

Professor Petrie tells us that the practice of burnt

sacrifice was the chief feature of the religion of the early Semites, and he therefore mentions that on the hill before the sacred cave, described in the book, there was found a great bed of ashes estimated at about fifty tons, itself the residue of hundreds of tons once accumulated there, for at different periods vast quantities have been removed.

The image has the features of a female, and this reminds us of how Jeremiah denounced the worship of Ashtoreth as the Queen of heaven. He describes the cult thus:

The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven.

We may now sum up the results obtained under five heads:

1. The inscriptions of Serabit el Khadem are evidently the records of a Semitic people who in 1500 B.C. were settled in Egyptian territory, and had lived long enough under such conditions to have become familiarized with both the religion and the hieroglyphic writing of Egypt.

2. The alphabet used by these Semitic people has on close inspection proved to be practically that of a Judæan monument of 800 years later, and as the name 'Ashtoreth' has a Hebrew prefix (ש), it is legitimate to infer that they were the ancestors of the Hebrews.

3. Ashtoreth is now positively identified with Hathor, the chief deity in the region of Sinai.

4. At the period to which these monuments belong, prior to the Exodus, those people wrote, *not as the Hebrews of later times did, from right to left*, but from left to right.

5. They probably were monotheists worshipping a Supreme Deity, here named Ashtoreth, but under the influence of Egypt they made use of various images which represented God under different aspects. It may be that the Sphinx now in the British Museum is the sort of image which Aaron made at Sinai (called the Golden Calf) when the Hebrews were clamouring for a visible representation of their tribal *Elohim*. Aaron gave it to the people as representing the God Yahveh (Ex. 32⁴⁻⁵).

Entre Nous.

Marcus Dods.

The loss to scholarship by the death of Dr. Marcus Dods is very great. The loss to the Church is greater. He was always more than his work.

He did the larger and more influential part of his work as a reviewer of books. What did the authors of the books he reviewed think of him? Did they recognize the conscience he put into a

review? Did they see that he brought his sympathy and imagination into exercise and placed himself alongside the author, judging him not only by what he did, but also by what he sought to do?

And what did the readers think?

The ordinary reader of reviews applauds the 'slating' reviewer. Dr. Dods did not applaud him. He knew how meagre his equipment is. He knew how little conscience he has. The

'I know all about it' and 'This will never do' style of reviewing was hateful to him, because it is pretentious, even when the reviewer does know something of the subject, and because it is pagan.

Virtue had gone out of Him.

There is a little volume of private prayers published by Mr. Culley, the Wesleyan publisher, called *The Unveiled Heart* (1s. net). Let us read them privately. They are really not for publication. On the opposite page to where the prayer is placed there is always a quotation from some other author. We may quote one of these quotations, though we cannot quote a prayer. This one may be taken as an additional illustration for the Great Text Commentary.

'Where have you been, my brother?
For I missed you from the street.'
'I have been away for a night and a day
At the great God's judgment-seat.'
'And what did you find, my brother,
When your judging there was done?'
'Weeds in my garden, dust in my doors,
And my roses dead in the sun;
And the lesson I brought back with me,
Like silence, from above—
On the Judgment-Throne there is room alone
For the Lord whose name is Love.'

There is a Foreword to the little book, written with marvellous fine feeling, by the Rev. E. Theodore Carrier. It has more in it for the preacher than some thick volumes of homiletics. The subject of the Foreword and the author of the prayers is the Rev. Walter James, who died after eighteen months' ministry. But such ministry. The editor tells us that an old parliamentarian who had held office in the late Queen's Government went one Sunday evening into the Wesleyan church at Shepherd's Bush Road. Mr. James was in the pulpit. His utterance was a revelation to the politician. At the close of the service he waited to see what would happen. But the placidity of the people was unruffled. He went to the vestry and found the preacher exhausted. Then the editor says: 'All preachers who, like Walter James, put heart and soul into their sermons, know something of this sense of exhaustion. We cannot fathom the significance of what was said of Christ on one occasion, "that virtue had gone out of Him." His virtue was inexhaustible. He could transfer the healing force that was in Him without personal diminution. But *we* cannot. When the preacher has poured out his very soul upon his congregation, when he has been thronged by the multitude, when moral force and spiritual vitality have passed from him to them in the mysterious transfusion of soul with soul—the inner force droops, and prayer mingled with patience is needed to restore

the soul to its original level of power. He must wait for the refreshing rains from the Hills of God to replenish his nature, as the autumn rains fill again the reservoirs which the summer heats have brought low. Walter James's congregation little knew the expense to nerve and physical energy at which his stirring appeals were made, though such close observers as Edward Hulse noted "the tension of that Paderewski face, fired yet paled with emotion."

The Great Text Commentary.

The best illustration this month has been found by the Rev. J. E. Compton, Studley, to whom a copy of Fairweather's *The Background of the Gospels* has been sent.

Illustrations for the Great Text for July must be received by the 1st of June. The text is Rev 2⁷.

The Great Text for August is Rev 2¹⁰—'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.' A copy of Jordan's *Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought* or any volume of the 'Scholar as Preacher' Series will be given for the best illustration.

The Great Text for September is Rev 2¹⁷—'To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.' A copy of Dr. Robert Scott's *The Pauline Epistles* or of Dr. W. G. Jordan's *Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought* will be given for the best illustration.

The Great Text for October is Rev 3²⁰—'Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' A copy of Law's *The Tests of Life* or of Oswald Dykes's *Christian Minister* will be sent for the best illustration.

The Great Text for November is Rev 7^{9, 10}—'After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.' A copy of Law's *The Tests of Life* or of Scott's *The Pauline Epistles* will be sent for the best illustration.

Those who send illustrations should at the same time name the books they wish sent them if successful.