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JEHOVAH

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“Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke xxiv. 27, R. V.).

FROM the prophets our Lord could gather much concerning Himself; but how from Moses, i.e. the Pentateuch? Moses had indeed foretold, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me.” This does refer to the Christ, but a perverse ingenuity will have it that some other prophet or a line of prophets must have been designed. Nevertheless, there is abundant reference to the world’s Redeemer in the books of Moses. It is in the word “Jehovah.”

In John xii. 41 it is written, “These things said Isaiah, because he saw his [Christ’s] glory; and he spake of him.” In Isa. vi. we have the record. It was in the temple. The seraphim hovered about Him and cried, “Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts.” The doorposts of the temple trembled. “Woe is me,” said Isaiah. “I am undone; . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.” Jehovah of the Old Testament became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, at once human and divine. Jeremiah (xxiii. 5, 6) writes, “The days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch,” — a human being, a descendant of David, — “and this is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness.” It is not probable that the prophets understood this mystery — God manifest in the flesh, suffering as a human being, and glorified. St. Peter refers to their eager search (1 Pet. i. 10, 11) as if the fullness of the truth was not revealed until Christ came. Still, it is written in Moses and the prophets; and this paper is a search for the world’s Redeemer in the Pentateuch.

Jehovah appears in the Old Testament as God in Re-

demption. The name does not occur in Gen. i. There *Elohim*, the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, is mentioned. Then, there was no sin and no need of redemption; but as soon as the history of man is taken up, the significant term appears. For man was a failure. He did not accomplish the design of his creation. He was made a little lower than God, *Elohim* (Ps. viii. 5). What he would have become had he maintained his integrity we can only conjecture. What he will become through Redemption we learn through the gospel, and the gospel was announced at once upon the fall. Man had been the link between earth and heaven. The highest of created beings on earth, he was made in the divine image. With him there entered a moral kingdom. Without a moral kingdom, with mankind only intellectual brutes, this world were an imperfect world. The crown was placed upon creation, and earth was lifted heavenward, when the godlike quality of choosing the right was introduced. It was a risk, for man might choose the wrong. Are we glad the risk was taken? With all the danger would we not say,

"Sinless the cattle munch their corn,
But I would be a man.
I serve because I will, and not
Because I must"?

Some would say that, man having failed, the race should have been extirpated and a new race started. Some of the rabbins conjectured that that was done, and that God's eternal years were marked with wrecks of races like our own on whom the experiment was tried. We know nothing of any such experiment; but we do know that, with the lapse from innocence, came the promise, The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen. iii. 15).

This brings us to the first recorded use of the word "Jehovah." "I have gotten a man, Jehovah" (Gen. iv. 1)—the word occurs in Gen. ii. and iii., but that is the work of the historian, Moses,—Eve utters her joyful exclamation upon the birth of Cain. What did she mean? The A. V. translators inferred, very properly, that Eve could

not have supposed she had given birth to God, and so they introduced the word "from." The R. V. translators, knowing that there was no such word as "from," introduced "with the help of" (in italics). But neither *from*, nor *with*, nor any other preposition, is in the text. "Jehovah" is in apposition with "man." The mark before it is the Hebrew *eth*, the mark of the accusative. We see it in the first verse in Genesis, "In the beginning God created [*eth*] the heaven and [*eth*] the earth." This particle occurs forty times in the first five chapters, always with the same signification. It may be thought that Gen. v. 22, "Enoch walked with God," is an exception; but it is not. The English requires the preposition; "walked with" is the translation of the Hebrew verb. Use another verb, and the preposition is not necessary; as, for instance, "Enoch accompanied God."

Now Eve did not suppose she was the mother of God. She requires no vindication from us by suggestions of omitted particles or errors of copyists, which theory has been worn very thin in recent years as to other parts of the Pentateuch. Luther in his first issue of the Bible translated the Hebrew, *Ich habe den Mann des Herrn*, 'I have gotten a man from [or of] Jehovah'; but in his next issue he translated the words as he found them, *Ich habe den Mann den Herrn*, and so they are in the German Bible to-day. The wealth of learning and ingenuity which has been expended in making sense of her words would have been saved if commentators had sought the meaning of "Jehovah" as Hengstenberg did. The word "Jehovah" is the third person singular of the future tense of the verb "to be." It means "he will be" or "he who will be." Eve remembered the promise that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. She saw in her child the promised deliverer. The serpent who beguiled her would beguile no more. Doubtless she had looked forward to the event, and the burden of childbearing was lightened. "Possession," she called her son; for she through whom sin had come into the world had brought forth the remedy. Bitter

must have been the remorse of our first parents after their disobedience. But the hope of the Deliverer comforted their hearts; and when her son was born, her exclamation was exultant, "I have gotten a man, the Promised One."

Eve was mistaken; and as the child developed, and she saw in him a sinful being, her hope faded. But the hope was not taken from the race; and whenever a mother brought forth a man child, the primal hope revived, only to be disappointed. So the years passed and no deliverer appeared. Did they lose confidence in the promise? The need was as great as ever: the race increased but every generation was a multiplication of sinners. Perhaps the race was too corrupt to furnish a Conqueror of Satan. Why not look elsewhere? Why not appeal to heaven itself? No doubt hesitatingly at first, but more urgently as time went on, until, in the days of Enosh, several hundred years after the birth of Cain, men began to call upon the name of Jehovah the Coming One (Gen. iv. 26).

The history of the race during that dispensation, as of every dispensation since, was a history of degeneracy. Men's imaginations were only evil continually. Still, some truth must have survived amid the general decline, for Noah "was a righteous man, and blameless in his generations; Noah walked with God." We find him using the name "Jehovah" (Gen. ix. 26) and recognizing His divinity, "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Shem." This may be a limitation of Jehovah as God of a race, but the limitation — if it be such — disappears at the next occurrence of the name. Melchizedek (Gen. xiv. 19-22) met Abram and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High [*El Elyon*], possessor of heaven and earth." And Abram responded, "I have lifted up mine hand unto Jehovah, God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth," — the same terms that Melchizedek had used, and identifying God Most High with Jehovah. In the mouth of Eve, the Expected One was a human being; but now with Abraham He is recognized as divine.

In the next chapter (Gen. xv. 7) God accepts the name.

That He could be both God and man was a wonder too great for men's intellect then; and it is an amazing mystery still, too great for doubting minds. Thenceforward, in the mouth of the patriarchs, Jehovah is a name exclusively divine. The incident at Mamre (Gen. xviii.) may indicate some bewilderment in the mind of Abraham. Three persons in human form appeared to him. Two of them, who are called angels (Gen. xix. 1), passed on to the destruction of Sodom. Abraham prayed to the other, but did not address him as Jehovah. Was Abraham perplexed by the appearance in human form? But it was Jehovah (xix. 13); and thereafter, through all the story of the patriarchs, Jehovah is identified with *Elohim*. Did the promise of the Deliverer, the Seed of the woman, fade from the memory of men? It would almost seem so. They used the name "Jehovah" as the name of God; but did they appreciate its meaning? It hardly seems that they did, but the last words of Jacob (Gen. xlix. 18) recall the primal promise. He gathers his sons together, and foretells their future one by one. He suddenly breaks his discourse by ejaculating, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah." What was it for which he had waited? Was it not the crushing of the serpent's head? But whether Jacob regarded the Deliverer as human or divine we cannot tell.

Passing on to the time of Moses, we find in Ex. iii. 14, 15, the solemn assumption of the name "Jehovah" by *Elohim*, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He declares Jehovah His memorial name. There is a promise in it. He is not only Creator and Ruler of mankind and of all living creatures, but One whose greatest blessing lay still in the future:—

"And God said unto Moses, *I will be that I will be. . . .* Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I will be* hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *He who will be*, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Ex. iii. 14, 15).

The three italicized phrases are each one word in Hebrew. All are in the future tense of the verb "to be," — the first and second in the first person, the third in the third person of that tense. In the margin of the Revised Version will be found the correct translation, "I will be," and the statement that Jehovah is from the same root. As if to emphasize the future significance, God uses the first person, "I will be," and repeats the phrase, and then declares His memorial name, "He will be," Jehovah. It is a prophecy of the central fact in the history of mankind, — the Incarnation of the Son of God.

It is the misfortune of the human mind that it cannot accept God's promises in their simplicity. It argues about them, and changes their significance to make them more credible. The promise was that the work of Satan would be counteracted by the seed of the woman. That surely must be a man; but when the Promised One delayed His coming, men lost their expectation of a future deliverance. In Moses the promise was renewed. Jehovah was God, and was present, but was coming still. And yet a strangeness clung to the word. It was viewed with reverence, which later degenerated into a superstitious fear of pronouncing it; and now our English translators avoid its meaning. The prophets make it clear that the Son of David is also the Son of God, but Israel could not or would not accept the mystery. At length the Coming One appeared and announced Himself "I Am."

Perhaps this inquiry may throw some light upon the perplexing passage, Ex. vi. 23: God said unto Moses, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty [*El Shaddai*]; but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them." How could this be? The patriarchs worshiped Jehovah. How, then, could it be said that He was not known to them? The promise contained in the meaning of the name was obscured to them. It ought not to remain obscure. The whole Bible points to Redemption through the God Man, Jesus of Nazareth. Upon Him human destiny depends.

The union of God and mankind was broken by a sin: it is restored by the Christ.¹

¹This interpretation is not new. The newness in this paper consists in limiting the inquiry to the Pentateuch. Hengstenberg, Pye Smith, and others have presented the same facts. A little book entitled "The Memorial Name," by Professor McWhorter of Yale College, ably discussing this theme, was issued fifty or sixty years ago; but just then the Higher Criticism, playing havoc with the Old Testament and making shuttlecocks of the divine names with various hypotheses, was on its exultant way, and had no sympathy with anything which recognizes the unity of the Bible, while Conservatism dreaded a disturbance of tradition.