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THE PENTATEUCH

IN CONTRAST WITH

THE SCIENCE AND MORAL SENSE
OF OUR AGE.

By *A PHYSICIAN.*

“Zufällige Geschichtswahrheiten können der Beweis von nothwendigen Vernunftwahrheiten nie werden”—Contingent historical truths can never be demonstration of necessary rational truths.—LESSING.



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“Honour thy father and thy mother”—a commandment natural, beautiful, good and proper in itself assuredly, but unhappily immediately marred by the context which adds : “that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee;” as if there were no finer sense of duty or moral obligation in question, and the merely selfish or animal element in the nature of man were the only ground of appeal for its observance ! The commandment, as it stands, is not unconditional, as it ought to be, but is weighted with a motive, and so meets us in guise of a compact or bargain, much of the same kind as that which Jacob proffers for the acceptance of his God when he sets up the stone Pillar at Beth-El, and vows a vow, saying, “*If* God will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, &c., *then* shall Jehovah be my God.” (Gen. xxviii. 20, 22).

“Thou shalt not kill.”

“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

“Thou shalt not steal.”

Respect for life, respect for that which is won by industry and thrift—property in the proper sense of the word ; and respect for the sanctity of the hearth and all that pertains to it,—these the Hebrew writer sees as the foundations on which human society rests. Propounded in this place as coming immediately from God, these laws, comprised as they are in the primary nature of man, are in complete accordance with the necessities and contingencies amid which he lives. More than one of them, indeed, appears to obtain even among certain of the sociable lower animals. Unhappily they are not all, and at all times, so carefully observed among ourselves as they deserve to be. How little they were regarded by the early Hebrews, is seen throughout the whole course of their history,—from the murderous invasion of Palestine and the rapine that accompanied it ; the treachery of Simeon and Levi when they slew the Sechemites ; the terrible order of Moses to the

Levites to consecrate themselves to Jehovah and earn a blessing by slaying their sons, their brothers, and their neighbours; the wholesale murders perpetrated by such heroes as Samson, Gideon, Samgar, and the rest; the individual homicides of Moses and Phinehas, and Jael and Judith; the incestuous acts of Reuben and Amnon; the cruelty, vindictiveness, unforgiveness, and adultery of David, &c., &c.

“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”

Nothing, undoubtedly, can be imagined more immoral and reprehensible in itself, or more adverse to the security of settled life, than false witness-bearing. Such a commandment, however imperative in a policed state of society, could obviously have had little application among nomads in the wilderness. Its place in the Decalogue consequently gives us another assurance of the late date at which this summary was composed and promulgated.

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour’s.”

The injunction against covetousness in general is a decided advance, in a moral point of view, on all that had gone before, and may be said to anticipate the high tone of feeling presumed possible in humanity by Jesus of Nazareth when he said that whosoever lusted unlawfully had already committed the sin in his heart. But it may not be impertinent to observe that the commandments against false witness-bearing and covetousness are not propounded as of universal application. It is his neighbour alone that the Jew is to have in respect. It was even held lawful to spoil the Egyptians; was it not, perchance, lawful also to swear falsely against them, and to covet their men- and maid-servants, their asses and their oxen.

The Israelites are repeatedly enjoined to keep these commandments?

Repeatedly, but never on the ground of moral propriety or unconditional necessity. It is always in prospect of some material advantage or return: that they may have long lives, that they may have a numerous progeny, that they may be victorious over their enemies, that they may escape Jehovah's anger, and not become victims of pestilence, famine, or the sword. The Decalogue, however, comprised but a very small part of the Hebrew legislation. Almost every particular in the life of the Jewish people, even to its most private and intimate relationships, is touched upon and regulated; practices being in several places denounced that proclaim a state of morals to have prevailed among the people which shocks the higher and more delicate feelings happily current in these our days.

Slavery is one of the subjects particularly referred to?

Slavery was an authorised institution among the Jews, as it continues to be among so many other barbarous and half-civilised peoples at the present time; notable, however, in the case of the chosen seed, as countenanced and regulated by their God. What is remarkable, too, is this: That Jewish slaves were not only obtained from abroad, but were purchased from among themselves. Parents were even authorised to sell their sons and daughters into slavery. The native Hebrew slave, however, had privileges of his own, for when he had served six years he recovered his freedom. Had he fallen into slavery having neither wife nor child, he then went out as he had come; but had he married and had had sons and daughters born to him during the term of his servitude, the children went not with him: they were the master's property, and—hard measure—the husband and father only obtained permission to remain with his wife and children by vowing himself to slavery for the rest of his life!

Resolving to share their fate, a particular ceremony was gone through?

The man being brought before the judge, and, we may presume, a declaration made and implemented, his ear was then bored through with an awl against the door-post, to signify his ascription to the house for ever, and the ceremony was complete.

The Israelites were in the habit not only of selling their daughters as slaves, but as concubines?

“If a man sell his daughter to be a maid-servant [concubine, as appears by the context], she shall not go out as the men-servants [slaves] do,”—to labour in the fields, doubtless. She is to do the indoor-work of the house and be her master’s bed-fellow. If she pleased not her master, however, “who hath betrothed her to himself,” or if she ceased to find favour in his eyes, she might be redeemed [euphemism for bought] by another; or she might be handed over to the owner’s son; but she was not to be sold to one of a strange nation. Did her owner, notwithstanding his disgust, continue to keep her, having taken to himself another wife, he was to provide her with food and raiment, and still to comport himself towards her in all things else as a husband. Failing in any of these particulars, the woman was free to go; but it was to be “without money,” *i.e.*, without a provision from the man to whom she had been as a wife. An easy way, therefore, lay open to the peculiar people of ridding themselves of disagreeable wives or concubines: they had but to neglect to be quit of them.

Did a man smite another so that he died, the offender was to be put to death?

So it is said, but with important reservations; for if the smiter had not lain in wait for his enemy, but “God had delivered him into his hands,” that is, had he come upon him unawares and slain him, then was he to have a place of refuge to flee to, Jehovah himself being held in this case to have thrown the obnoxious party in the slayer’s way, and given him the required opportunity to wreak his vengeance on his enemy.

“If, in striving together, one man smite another with a stone or his fist, and he die not, but keep his bed, if he rise again and walk abroad upon his staff, then he that smote him shall be quit; only he shall pay him for loss of time and his healing”—surely an equitable law, though something more might possibly in many cases have been required.

Did a man smite his servant or his maid (his male or female slave) with a rod, and he or she died under his hand, then was the smiter to be surely punished; but, did the servant or the maid “continue for a day or two,” he was not to be punished, for the servant or maid “is his money.”

A notable distinction this between a cause immediate and a cause a little more remote, and made on grounds that excite our wonder in the present day when met with in a book still believed by so many to be the word of God to man; to have been composed under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, whatever meaning is attached to the phrase, and to be used as among the prime and indispensable instruments in the education of the young.

The slave, however, was not even thus indifferently protected, save when his life was endangered?

Did a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, says the inspired text, so that it perish, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake! Worse we are to understand might have befallen the unhappy slave, and he was, therefore, to be well content that he had only lost an eye.

The same pleasant award is made in case the loss were the minor one of a tooth?

Did the owner smite out his man-servant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake!

Did a man strive with and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit departed from her, and no farther mischief followed, he was to be surely punished

as the woman's husband should lay upon him, or, "he shall pay as the judge determines," but if other mischief followed—if the woman died, then should life be given for life.

This paying of like with like was a general principle in the ancient Israelitish legislation?

Not carried out to the letter in every case, however, as we have seen above, still it is said: Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe,—the *lex talionis*, in a word, was the rule. But the savage nature of the precept, though delivered as from God, and the evils to which it necessarily led, were seen through by more than one of the later Prophets, and the moral teacher of Nazareth expunged it from the code of humanity for ever when he said: "It was said of old, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, do good to them that hate you," &c. (Matt. v.) If we perchance see that this is carrying matters somewhat far, we are still within the pale of our proper humanity when we abstain from returning evil with the like.

Among these ancient ordinances or laws ascribed to Moses, though a few of them only can be presumed to date from of old, there is one that is completely in harmony with what seems natural right, though entirely ignored by modern legislation?

That which says in these terms: "If a man entice a maid that is not betrothed and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife" (Exod. xxii. 16.) Were such a law now on the statute book there would certainly be less seduction practised, and fewer bastard children brought into the world. If union of bodies be the sole bond of marriage, as it is acknowledged to be by our laws—ceremonies and parchments going for nothing, but being mere shams or make-believes, would it not be logical were the fact of such union having taken place to be constituted legal marriage in every instance?

Such being God's or Nature's law, there can be but one consistent answer to the question.

An ordinance follows those we have on matters connubial which had long a most disastrous influence on human society ?

That which says : "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

A witch ! what is a witch ?

An old woman presumed to be possessed of supernatural power of a wicked or maleficent kind.

We have no such personage among us now ?

The kind became extinct when physical science was born. The last reputed English witch was judicially murdered by a learned but credulous judge about two centuries ago—warning for all time that prescriptive learning and legal eminence are no safeguards against superstition and its offspring inhumanity.

The learned judge in the instance referred to, as in others—and they are legion—that had gone before, only followed in all simplicity and blind sincerity the injunction he found in his Bible, and administered the law of the land, based, like his belief, on its text ?

No question of this. But the bad law has been abrogated, and the judge is now pitied for his credulity ; the belief in witches and witchcraft having died out from among the cultivated, though it still lingers among the imperfectly educated and the vulgar, kept alive as it is by the authority of the book which the clergy and ignorant laity alike continue to force on the world as inspired by God, and as the absolute guide in morals and religion, which the open-eyed see that it most assuredly is not.

There is another ordinance among these reliques of old and barbarous times that must have wrung the hearts of parents, and brought mourning into the homes of men through countless ages of the ancient world ?

The one we have seen attempted to be particularly connected with the escape from Egypt and the institution of the Passover, which says: "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me, likewise of thine oxen and thy sheep; seven days it shall be with his dam, on the eighth thou shalt give it unto me." Of the terrible meaning hidden in these words we have already had occasion to speak, and found it not doubtful that "giving to the God" in ancient times meant sacrifice upon his altar. And it is to be noted that the ordinance as it stands in this—one of the least manipulated parts of the Hebrew Scriptures,—makes no provision for redemption by substitution or by money: the first-born of man and beast, by the oldest Hebrew statute we possess, was *Cherem* to the God; and that which was *cherem* could not be redeemed, but must surely be put to death. The word in the original which is softened down in the English version into "set apart," means *burned*:—the blood as the life was poured out about the altar, and the body burned upon its fire as an offering of a sweet savour to the El God,—Baal (Saturn), or Molech. So late as the days of the prophet Ezekiel, the redemption clause made no part of the text; it was interpolated after his day.*

Sacrifice we know, by the universal practice of ancient peoples, to have been among the oldest, as it was also believed to be the most potent of all the means possessed by man of propitiating the God he feared as having power to do him good or ill?

It was so unquestionably, especially among the Semitic tribes that peopled Western Asia, and the more precious the offering, whether in itself or to the giver, the higher rose the claim upon the God for favour through its means. But the life of a human being was obviously of far more worth than that of a

* Comp. Dozy, Op. cit., S. 8.

beast, and the life of a man's own child priceless to him in comparison with any other human life. Hence the value attached to human sacrifice in general, but, above and beyond all other, to the sacrifice of a son by his father.

Ideas of the same nature appear to have continued to influence men's minds and their acts up to relatively recent epochs in religious history?

That they have done so is as unquestionable as that they continue to do so at the present hour. Ecclesiastical Christianity has no other foundation. The "crowning sacrifice," as the death of their Christ is characterised by the churches, has been well said by an able and learned writer to perpetuate an ancient rite in its most appalling form, making of a merciful God a ruthless demon, and giving to the purely moral doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth the character of a religion of Molech.*

In the later periods of the Jewish History, however, as we have it, the first-born of men were ordered to be redeemed?

They were so, and Jehovah is even made by one of the later prophets to repudiate the claim to all that opened the matrix which is put into his mouth by the earlier writer: "They caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire to Molech, which I commanded them not." (Jerem. xxxii. 35). Such a rite as the ever-recurring sacrifice of a new-born babe, the first of its parents, wore too terrible an aspect to continue as an institution after some little progress had been made from utterly barbarous to more civilised life. *Substitution* was, doubtless, the first step taken in favour of the human victim, and among the Hebrews may even be supposed to have preceded the *circumcision*, or partial sacrifice, and the money price that were finally paid to the priest in its stead. But it

* Mackay, 'Progress of the Intellect,' ii., 460.

was not among the Israelites alone that redemption of the human subject from immolation to the God by means of a substitute or a payment in money came at length to be effected. We have evidence of a like advance in ideas leading to like results in practice among other ancient peoples. If in the Hebrew legends we have the ram caught in the thicket as a substitute for Isaac on the point of being sacrificed by his father Abraham—a tale of very modern invention, as has been hinted,* the name of Abraham not having been known to the Jews before the days of David—in those of Greece we find Athamas spared the trial of sacrificing his son Phrixos, the divinity in his now more placable aspect consenting, like Jehovah, to receive a ram instead of the youth. Iphigenia, too, in some of the myths, escapes her impending doom by the goddess at whose shrine she was to have bled, accepting a hind in her place. Belonging to still earlier periods, perhaps, there is, further, the myth of Jupiter Laphisteus, to whom Rhea presents a stone in swaddling bands instead of the customary new-born child,—Jupiter Laphisteus, in whom we not only recognise the Chronos and Saturnus of the Aryan race, but the El-Elijon, the Chijun, Chamos, Baal, and Molech of the Semites under another name. In the Egyptian records, still farther, we have the story of the Three Candles burnt to the Sun God in his temple at On, in lieu of the Three Men who, from immemorial times, had been the daily sacrifice at his shrine.

These legendary and mythical tales all proclaim the advance that may have been made somewhat simultaneously among the better policied and more civilised peoples of the ancient world in their ideas of what might be truly acceptable to their gods?

Very possibly: *Substitution*—an animal for a human

* Vide Our Genesis, page 70-71.

being; *Circumcision*—Sacrifice of a small but significant part for the whole; Presentation at the shrine with an *Initiatory rite* of no more moment than the sprinkling with a little water—still practised in these days, and a *Money payment* to the priest—still also part of the ceremony.—Such, in all likelihood, were successive steps, proclaiming advances in the Religious Idea, due, undoubtedly, to progress in the knowledge of Nature, as well as in civilisation and general refinement among mankind.

Human victims, however, long continued in ancient times to be offered to the Gods on extraordinary occasions?

No longer presented as the rule, they nevertheless continued to be offered occasionally and exceptionally. In entering on their wars, some of the ancient peoples seem to have thought that an oblation of the kind to the God of Slaughter was a due and necessary preliminary. Achilles, as we read in the *Iliad*, offered up a number of his Trojan captives to Ares; and Themistocles, in less mythical times, sacrificed three distinguished Persian prisoners to Dionysus on the eve of the battle of Salamis. After his victory over Antony, Augustus, to propitiate the manes of the deified Cæsar, sacrificed three hundred victims of senatorial and equestrian rank upon his altar. Commodus offered up a human victim with his own hand in the Mithriac mysteries to which he was attached; and Heliogabalus, two centuries after the Christian era, had the sons of some of the most distinguished families of Italy brought to Rome and sacrificed in the Syriac mysteries which supplied the fashion of his religious clothing. In the Hebrew history we have the story of Mesha, King of Moab, besieged in his capital and sorely pressed by the Israelites, sacrificing his son and heir, dressed in the royal robes, upon the wall in sight of the besiegers, and with such effect that they, indignant, alarmed, and satisfied that no

further effort on their part would now avail them—the God being necessarily propitiated by so distinguished a victim—raised the siege and departed home. Is it needful, in fine, to allude to the great sacrifice which the successors of the Jewish sect having Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, for their teacher, believe to have been offered to Jehovah as a propitiation for the sins of mankind; or to speak of the fiery deaths of heretics and so-called blasphemers in modern times, as other than offerings to appease the offended majesty of God?—Ordinary criminals were beheaded or hanged; they to whom heresy or blasphemy was imputed were done to death by fire.

What may be said to be the general character of the many commandments or ordinances that now follow in the book of Exodus?

That many of them are good and humane, some of them childish, and a few positively wicked. But all obviously are not by the same hand; numerous interpolations in favour of the Levitical caste and the priesthood being especially conspicuous. There is further such incongruity between so many of the commandments and the circumstances of the times in which they are generally presumed to have been promulgated, that it is easy to see they cannot all date from the days of Moses. They are, indeed, mostly and very distinctly adapted to a people policied in a certain sense, settled in fixed homes, and having the culture of the soil for their principal occupation, not to a multitude wandering in the wilderness, destitute of everything, and only kept from perishing of hunger and thirst by reiterated miraculous interpositions—a multitude who could not possibly have brought ripe fruits and fermented liquors, the produce of carefully tended vineyards and fields, nor consumed in smoke upon the altars of their God holocausts of the bullocks, sheep, and

goats which, had they had them, were so much wanted for their own subsistence. What lands, among other items spoken of in the legislation, could they have had at this time either to till or to leave untilled; with what were they to hold high festival three times in the year, when they had neither leavened nor unleavened bread to eat; what could they have sown, what reaped in the waterless wilderness; and how could they have appeared otherwise than empty-handed at all times before Jehovah? Let us cease to think of these ancient writings as contemporaneous with the still more ancient times and circumstances they pretend to portray!

All, indeed, seems plainly enough to imply that the legislation ascribed to Moses or referred to his age must have been the product of much more modern times?

Such a conclusion is inevitable. There is, nevertheless, so much that is old in the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Chapters of the Book of Exodus that they have together been referred in the main to ancient documents, believed to have been extant in the time of the authors of the text in its present form.*

Moses is now called up into the mountain along with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the Elders of Israel; but Moses alone is admitted to the presence of Jehovah, the rest being ordered to worship afar off. In spite of this, however, and very inconsistently as it seems, we are by and by informed that the Elders of Israel saw God and he laid not his

* Compare particularly Dr Davidson's Introduction to the Old Testament: 'Authorship and Composition of the Pentateuch,' Vol. I., p. 1—134; Knobel's 'Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zum alten Testament—Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus,' 8vo, Leipz. 1857; Kuehnen, 'Hist. critique des Livres de l'Ancien Testament,' Trad. de l'Hollandais par M. A. Pierson, Tom. I.; the Bishop of Natal's exhaustive work, 'The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua,' and the learned Dr Kalisch's 'Commentaries on Exodus and Leviticus.'

hand on them; they saw God and yet did eat and drink!

Saw God! What man has ever seen God, save in the manifestations made of his Being and Agency in the things of heaven and earth, and in their various properties or aptitudes? If we are not informed in so many words that it was an Image of their God that was seen by the Elders, the context seems to show that it could have been nothing else; for, under his feet, it is said, "they saw as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness"—the similitude of the God, in a word, relieved by the clear blue sky. Or, did the Elders of Israel perchance see more of the Infinite body of God than appears in the expanse of heaven—called Dyaus by our far off Aryan Ancestors, Zeus and Deus by their descendants, the Greeks and Romans? If it was not an Image on which they looked they certainly saw no more of God—the Infinite, the Eternal—than meets man's eye when he gazes on the depths of endless space. But this is not what is meant in the text. The ancient Hebrews, like modern Christians, thought of God as a Person, and so, perforce, possessed of parts and proportions, as well as of the intellectual and moral endowments they owned themselves.

The Elders see Jehovah, however, as said, and survive the sight; but Moses alone is allowed to come into his immediate presence. And there upon the mountain, shrouded by a cloud, he remains according to the record for forty days and forty nights, without meat or drink—a long time if we measure it by what we know of aught that passed between his God and him.

Jehovah, it is said, bids Moses speak to the children of Israel and order them to bring offerings of gold, silver and brass, of blue, purple and scarlet fine linen, of goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red and badgers'

skins, of shittim wood, oil for the lights, spices for the anointing oil, ingredients for sweet incense, onyx stones for the Ephod, and precious stones for the breastplate of the priest. "And that I may dwell among ye," proceeds the narrative, making Jehovah the speaker, "let them make me a Sanctuary after the pattern of the Tabernacle, two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and a cubit and a half high, to be overlaid with gold within and without; and a Mercy Seat of pure gold two cubits and a half high, a cubit and a half broad; and two Cherubims of beaten gold, one at either end with wings covering the Mercy Seat, their faces looking towards one another," &c.

This Ark or Sanctuary was a highly-important piece of furniture with the ancient Hebrews ?

As with several others among the peoples of the old world—Egyptians, Phœnicians, Assyrians, &c. Upon the proper ark or coffer, the seat or throne, designated *Mercy Seat* in the Old Testament, is ordered to be placed, where the God was to be found for consultation by the priest; and within it the object entitled EDUTH was commanded to be kept. The ark itself, in some sort the symbol as containing the symbols of Deity, was believed to be possessed of supernatural powers; for it was death to touch or attempt to look into it, and the power and countenance of the tutelary God was supposed to accompany it wherever it went.

We have already had the Eduth mentioned incidentally in connection with the miraculous manna of the wilderness, when we found the word translated *Testimony*, and used now as if it were Jehovah that was meant, and again, as if the Law or Tables of the Law were the thing signified; the word Eduth, indeed, is always translated *Testimony* in this sense in the English version of the Bible. But when the context is taken into account, it seems as if it cannot

always have such a meaning. It constantly meets us as if it could only apply to an *image* or *symbolical figure* of some sort.

The Israelites, however, were emphatically forbidden to make molten or graven images, or the likeness of anything in heaven or earth?

At an advanced period of their history as a people; certainly not before the age of Solomon. But neither in the days of this Sybarite king, nor even in much later times, do the Jews appear to have known, or, if they knew, to have given any heed to the prohibition. We have but just seen figures of Cherubim ordered by Jehovah himself for the covering of the Ark; and an empty seat would have been an indifferent object for consultation by the priest when he entered the holy of holies to ask advice. The seat must have been occupied, therefore, and doubtless by the Image or Symbol of the God. If neighbouring tribes and peoples had images and emblems of their Gods, we may be very certain that the early Hebrews also had theirs:—They had borne for forty years in the wilderness the “Tabernacle of their Chiun, their idol, the Star of their God which they had made,” says one of the earlier prophets whose writings have escaped mutilation by modern editors (Amos v. 26). The golden *calf* set up by Aaron in the Wilderness and the golden *calves* erected by Jeroboam at a subsequent period, as the God and the Gods who had brought them out of Egypt, could have been no novelties to the Israelites. On the contrary, they were the old familiar forms under which Deity was conceived and approached with offerings by their fathers as by themselves. The interdict against molten and graven images came from the advanced Jehovistic party of the kingdom of Judah, about the time of Hezekiah probably, if it were not even so late as that of Josiah, when the leading minds among the Jews had attained to the conception of the all-pervading, or so-styled,

spiritual nature of the Godhead, which as Infinite and Ubiquitous can be fitly represented by no "*similitude*."

The Eduth may, therefore, have been an image, if not of any such specific Divinity as was conceived of under the names of El, Eloha, Chiun, Chemosh, Baal, Melkart, Molech, or Jahveh, yet of the emblem that was once universally held typical of the reproductive power inherent in Nature or the Nature God?

There are hints in various places of the Hebrew sacred writings that have escaped the expurgating hands of their latest editors which necessarily lead to the conclusion that the seat in the sanctuary was not unoccupied, but was verily filled by an image of the God himself, carefully secluded, however, in later times at least, from the prying eyes of vulgar curiosity. Aaron, on entering the inner veiled compartment of the shrine, was to take a censer full of live coals from the altar of burnt offerings, to sprinkle incense thereon, and "raise a cloud before Jehovah." The prophet Isaiah must have seen something more than an empty stool when he exclaimed that he was undone, for that he "a man of unclean lips had seen the king (Melek, Molech), the Lord of Hosts (Jahveh-Tzabaoth) vi. 5. Ezekiel, indeed, does not hesitate to fill the throne which he saw with the "likeness of the appearance of a man" (i. 26), a roundabout way of saying an image of Jehovah; and then we have Jehovah's own orders for the construction of the sanctuary in which he promises to *dwell* among his people. But God the Infinite and Eternal can have his dwelling-place in no sanctuary made by the hands of man. It was his similitude, therefore, or his symbolical representation that was to be seen on the lid of the Sacred Coffer between the Cherubim; and, when not there displayed, that was laid up with other sacred apparatus in its interior, the coffer being of the precise dimensions calculated to receive the life-size seated figure of a man.

The ancient Hebrews were not, as already hinted, the only people who had a sacred ark or coffer, in which articles held holy, or apparatus employed in their religious rites were stored ?

By no means. The ark of the ancient Egyptians, as we see it in their paintings and sculptures, bears the most exact resemblance to that of the Hebrews as described in their records. It has the mysterious figures of the cherubim with wings on its cover, and between them the Truncated Cone, symbol of the generative or reproductive principle immanent in nature. Among the peoples of the ancient world the Ark or Sacred Coffer appears to have been more especially connected with the worship of Dionysus—the Sun, in his character of regenerator. In the one said to have been found in the citadel of Troy, when taken by the Greeks, the image or emblem of Dionysus—*Αγαλμα Διονύσου* (*αγαλμα simulacrum, res auro ornata, an Image, a gilded Something*), is the article that is particularly mentioned as having been found within it; and from an old writer, Clement of Alexandria, we learn that in the heathen arks or sacred coffers, generally, the article laid up was *του Διονύσου Αιδοιον* (*αιδοια pudenda ab αιδως*). These references may help us to a conclusion as to what the Eduth really was which was stowed away in the Hebrew Ark of the Covenant, and so carefully concealed from all eyes save those of the priest. Is not the Greek word *Αιδως*, in fact, the Hebrew word Eduth ? *

* On the Hebrew Ark of the Testimony see Spencer, *De Legibus Hæbræor. Ritualibus*, Lib. iii. Diss. v. Singularly enough the word Eduth is not mentioned in that mine of learning and interesting information, Winer's *Biblisches Realwörterbuch* (3tte. Aufl., 2 vols., 8vo, Leipz., 1847). To suppose that Winer was ignorant of what is said above were absurd. He knew it all; but the theologian could not face the conclusion to which the scholar and critic must necessarily have come. See also Movers, *Die Phœnizier* i., chaps. 2 and 3.

Exodus : The Seven-light Candlestick. 223

There are several other articles connected with the Hebrew ritualistic worship which require more than a passing notice ?

The Seven-light Candlestick in particular, with its arms—three on either side, to hold as many lamps ; its shaft, branches, bowls, knobs, flowers, and even the accessory tongs and snuff dishes being all alike ordered to be “one beaten work of pure gold, after the pattern that was shown thee in the mount.”

The lavish expenditure of gold and precious stones, and of such costly stuffs as purple, blue and scarlet linen, &c., might lead to the conclusion that the fugitives had spoiled the Egyptians more effectually than it is easy to imagine them willing to lend. But the whole tale is a fiction, involving as it does childish or worse conceptions of the Deity, and containing injunctions so utterly impossible of execution under the circumstances, that there needs no more than a hint to satisfy every reasonable person not blinded by a foregone conclusion, that it must date from days when Jerusalem was the capital of the kingdom of Judah, with the first or even the second Temple already in existence, and serving as a model from which the writer drew.

The gold candlestick with its seven lights, so particularly described in the text, must be presumed to have had a special significance, symbolical or otherwise ?

That it was symbolical, may be safely assumed, of the Sun, Moon, and five known Planets—Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and, high and far removed over all, Saturn, the peculiar star of the ancient Hebrew race—the star of their God by whatever name known to them at different epochs of their history—Chiun, Chamos, El, Israel, Baal, Molech, or Jahveh.

This costly piece of furniture it has been surmised was not for ornament only or even for giving light ?

Besides its symbolical significance and every-day uses, it appears to have been in constant requisition, in conformity with the astrological notions of antiquity, for purposes of divination, and especially in casting nativities. The arms of the candlestick being in sockets and moveable, the lamps they carried, severally representing a planet, were probably arranged by the priest in fanciful accordance with the relative positions in the heavens of the sun, moon, and wandering stars at the moment of a birth, and a forecast thus obtained of the fate that was to befall the future man or woman.*

Such forecasts or predictions, however, must have been constantly falsified by events ?

No doubt; but in spite of this the belief in Judicial Astrology has either had such tenacity of life in itself, or continues to possess such attractions for the superstitious and uninformed, that it cannot be said even now to have wholly died out from among us. Though no use is ever made, in so far as we know, of the information obtained, and the end for which it was once so eagerly sought after is not even surmised, the precise moment at which every child born among us comes into the world is still regularly noted by the gossips who hold high festival in the Lying-in room.

There are other remnants of the old sun, moon, and star worship, and of the beliefs once universal in planetary influences that still linger in the world ?

The general and genial merry-making at the winter solstice—*Dies natalis Solis*, of the ancient world—the brief period of mourning followed by rejoicings at the vernal equinox—Easter (*Ex Oriente Lux*)—of which we have already had occasion to speak; the Beal-fires (El, Bel, Baal), still danced about and leaped through with shouts and exclamations by the Breton and Irish peasantry at the summer solstice;

* See Landseer, 'Sabæan Researches,' 4to, Lond., 1823.

the sacrifice of the goats, one to Jehovah, another to Azazel, by the Israelites on *Soul-Affliction* Day, and the weeping of the women of Northern Palestine for Tammuz, in the olden time, at the autumnal equinox, are all alike reminders or relics of the Sun, Moon, Star, and Time or Season worship that once prevailed so extensively over the ancient world ; a form of worship, however, implying a considerably advanced epoch in the history of human society ; for *Astrologism* proper could have formed no element in the religious system of the primitive races of mankind. Among these the mere sense of A Something beyond themselves, accredited with power to do them good or ill, would seem to have constituted, as it still continues with the Savage to constitute, the ground and the substance of all religious belief and observance.

Particular instructions are given for the fashion and quality of the altar, or altars,—for there were two, one for burnt offerings, another for incense ?

The sacrificial altar in earlier times was of the simplest possible construction, consisting of nothing more than a heap of earth or a circle of twelve unhewn stones—one for each month of the year—set up on level ground. At a later period it seems to have consisted of a grating of brass, resting at the sides on supports, and approached by a number of steps.

The Priest's robes are also objects of most minute instructions to Moses ?

They are so indeed ; he was to speak to such as were "wise-hearted and filled by the Lord with the spirit of wisdom ;" and they, with the directions he should give them, were to make a robe and broidedered coat, an ephod and girdle, all of gold, and of blue and purple and scarlet fine twined linen, with cunning work ; a cap or mitre for the head ; two chains of pure gold of wreathen work for the neck, hung from two onyx stones on the shoulders, set in gold and engraven with the names of the twelve tribes of

Israel. Besides which there was to be a "Breast-plate of Judgment,"—Choschen,—four-square, with four rows of precious stones, three in each row, engraven with the names of the twelve tribes, and attached to the Ephod by means of gold chains; and another article that has been the subject of much discussion with Bible expositors and commentators,—the "Urim and Thummim."

What was the Urim and the Thummim?

The text says no more than this:—"Thou shalt put in the breast-plate of Judgment the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before Jehovah."

This would make the Urim and Thummim distinct from the breast-plate of Judgment:—something to be put into or contained within it?

It would so according to the rendering of the original usually followed. But the Hebrew may as well be translated *put upon* as *put into*. The Urim and Thummim has consequently been thought by competent critics to be nothing more than the complete breast-plate under another name—a conclusion which has much to recommend it. By one distinguished scholar and historical writer, however (Michaelis, *Mosaisches Recht*), it is believed to have consisted of two or more precious stones, cut as dice, which were used in "asking Jehovah by Lot"—a mode of essaying to look into futurity of which we find such frequent mention in the Hebrew Scriptures, although the lots or means used are nowhere named. The learned Spencer (*De Legibus Hæbræorum Ritualibus*, Lib. iii. Diss. vii.), following the LXX., and assuming the words to signify Manifestation and Truth, after a disquisition extending over one hundred and ninety-three quarto pages! opines that the Urim and Thummim were Teraphim or sacred domestic images of the God or Gods! Great obscurity, therefore, manifestly hangs over the sub-

ject of the Urim and Thummim. But when we think of the many hands through which the Hebrew Scriptures have passed, the numberless manipulations they have undergone, and the interest later editors had in keeping everything like Idolatry and Sabæism out of sight, we shall not wonder that so little is left us by which we may positively know what the Urim and Thummim signified in itself, or how it was used for purposes of *divination*, in which, as its designation, Breast-plate of Judgment, implies, it was undoubtedly an important instrument.

The thing called Urim and Thummim is ordered to be composed of twelve precious stones, which are said to have been—

A Ruby, a Topaz, a Carbuncle,
an Emerald, a Sapphire, and a Diamond ;
a Ligure or Cornelian, an Agate, an Amethyst,
a Beryl, an Onyx, and a Jasper ?

Assuming the stones to be rightly named, the first series of six is seen to consist of such as are of a lustrous or brilliant character ; the second series, like in number, of others that are generally opaque or lustreless. To the first series it must have been that the epithet Urim (*Ur, Or, Light*) was applied ; as to the lustreless set of six, it was that the title Thummim was given (*Tumas, Sanskrit, Darkness*).* Ordered to be engraved with the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the twelve stones upon the High Priest's Choschen certainly also typified the twelve signs of the zodiac, which, besides symbolizing the months of the year, were likewise held to be the *houses* of the planets and of several of the more remarkable among the fixed stars, whose rising and setting marked the seasons. The brilliant stones were doubtless representatives of the signs when the sun, in the ascendant in the northern hemisphere, was pouring light and

* Nork, *Biblische Mythologie*, i. 175, note.

life upon the world; the dark or lustreless stones, again, stood for the inferior signs, when the power of the sun is in abeyance, and darkness, symbolical of night and death, dominates the hour.

The composition of the Urim and Thummim seems, therefore, to proclaim the astrological or divining nature of the instrument?

That it was consulted through the priest as an oracle, and referred to at times in learning the will of Jehovah, is certain. It is to be presumed that the aspect of the heavens and the places therein of the planets and principal fixed stars having been noted at the time action in any contingency was proposed to be taken, the Urim and Thummim was then consulted by the priest in conformity with the rules of the diviner's art, and an answer in affirmation or negation of the purpose in question obtained.

We have instances in the Hebrew Scriptures in which the Urim and Thummim was used in this way?

When Joshua, the son of Nun, was chosen by Moses as his successor, he was set before Eleazar the priest, and the congregation of Israel, and the priest is ordered at all times to "ask counsel for him after the judgment of the Urim before Jehovah" (Numb. xxvii. 21). Saul enquiring of Jehovah on a certain occasion after he had fallen out of favour with Samuel the priest, through non-compliance with his behests, "received no answer, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by the prophets," *i.e.*, the soothsayers (1 Sam. xxviii. 6). The Teraphim, or household gods, of which the Ephod was one of the forms most familiar to the chosen people of Jehovah in historical times, appears to have been frequently substituted for the Urim and Thummim: "Bring hither the Ephod," says King David, the man according to God's own heart—by credit and report, to Abiathar the priest, upon a certain occasion; and addressing

the Idol he says: "O Jehovah God, will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his (Saul's) hand?" And Jehovah said: "They will deliver thee up" (1 Sam. xxiii. 9). Another time the same pious and exemplary monarch—according to the Bible and the clergy—says: "Bring me hither the Ephod," and he "enquires of Jehovah, saying, shall I pursue after this troop?" and is answered: "pursue" (Ib. xxx. 7). The Urim and the Ephod, or Gilded Image of Jehovah, were therefore used indifferently as means of ascertaining the will and pleasure of their God by the Hebrew people.

But the children of Israel are always credited with having been worshippers of the one only God, and to have known nothing of idolatry?

Let the reader conclude for himself on the above showing what they were in fact, and begin, if by possibility he may, to read the Bible with his eyes unsealed and his reason as his guide.

Returning to the prescriptions for the priest's robes, a certain part called Ephod, is particularly described?

It was to be made in fashion of a habergeon, or cape, having a hole in the upper part for the head to pass through. Its hem, however, was elaborately ornamented with figures of pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, having gold bells interposed.

The pomegranate had a particular symbolical significance in the religious mysteries of the ancient world?

It was a special emblem of fertility, and an element in the cult of the Reproductive Principle inherent in Nature, with which, as with Sabæism, the Hebrew system, when seen with the eyes of the understanding, is found to assimilate in so many particulars.

The word Ephod has, therefore, two different meanings in the Hebrew scriptures?

In one we have seen it applied to the Image of

Jehovah, used by King David as an oracle; here we find it applied to a part of the priest's robes.

The High Priest was further to have his special title or designation engraved on a plate of gold fastened to the front of his mitre or cap?

A title expressed in these solemn and significant words: Holy to Jehovah (Holiness to the Lord, Eng. vers.).

What might this imply?

More than appears at first sight. The High Priest—Aaron—was “to bear the iniquity of the offerings hallowed by the children of Israel in their gifts;” *i. e.* Aaron, as High Priest and consecrated to Jehovah, in receiving the offerings of the people at the door of the Sanctuary was presumed to concentrate on himself the essence of their expiatory powers, and in virtue of his office was liable to be called on at any moment to enact the part of substitute and make atonement in his individual person for the sins of the people at large. And we shall find sufficient reason by and by for concluding that Aaron was actually required, at a critical moment in the progress of the Israelites towards the Promised Land, to make good the terms of the contract or understanding on which he held his office.

Aaron's sons, solemnly consecrated as his assistants in the priestly office, and so devoted to Jehovah, are also furnished with clothing according to special patterns ordered by their God?

They are to have coats, breeches to cover their nakedness, caps of a certain fashion, &c.

Can we, living in this 19th century of the Christian æra, believe that any orders for the clothing of Aaron and his sons ever came from God?

The Infinite all-pervading Essence or Spirit conceived by us as Cause, and called God, sends man into the world naked enough, but furnished with the senses which induce, and the ingenuity which enables

him to clothe himself for decency, for comfort, and even for what he intends as ornament—whence not only the loin-band, and the blanket and skewer, but the embroidered coat, the chignon, and the bustle—all according to patterns he devises for himself; certainly after none devised for him by God.

The ceremonies by which Aaron and his sons are consecrated to their office are also matters of particular instruction to Moses from Jehovah ?

Besides anointing with consecrated oil, a bullock and two rams are to be sacrificed before the tabernacle of the congregation. The fat, kidneys, and caul of the bullock are to be burned on the altar of sacrifice, but the rest of the carcase is to be consumed with fire outside the camp. The blood, as Jehovah's most peculiar portion, was to be streaked upon the horns of the altar, and poured out about its base.

And the rams—how were they to be disposed of ?

One of them was to be sacrificed, like the bullock, but the whole carcase was to be burned upon the altar as an offering to Jehovah ; the bullock, doubtless, was seen as too bulky to be conveniently dealt with in this way. The other ram, having been slaughtered, its blood was to be put on the tip of the right ear of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands and the great toes of their right feet severally, their robes being at the same time sprinkled with anointing oil and blood ; and whilst the fat and kidneys, the rump and right shoulder were burnt on the altar as Jehovah's portion, the rest of the carcase was to be seethed in the holy place, and there eaten by Aaron and his sons.

This eating of the victims sacrificed in view of the expiation of sin was held to be an indispensable part of the religious rite ?

Without it the act of atonement was not believed to be complete. As the Life had gone to Jehovah in the blood, and certain parts, sublimated by fire, been

presented to him for a sweet savour and for food, so was it by the flesh of the victim, hallowed through Jehovah's acceptance of his share, entering the bodies of the priest and the assembly, that they were presumed to be sanctified and their sins forgiven them. Like other old observances grounded on speculative notions, the custom of offering an imaginary sacrifice, eating the imaginary flesh, drinking the imaginary blood of an imaginary victim, and so obtaining forgiveness of their sins—oftener real than imaginary—is still kept up by communities boasting of the advances they have made in reason and refinement.

Can we in the present age of the world, and with the lights we have through our cultivated understanding and accumulated knowledge, believe that God ever gave such instructions as we have but just perused—ever ordered the fashion of the priest's garments—ever, as a means of consecration to his service, commanded his ministers to be anointed with spiced oil; to be touched on the tips of their ears, their thumbs, their great toes, and to have their clothes sprinkled with the blood of a sheep?

It is impossible to do so any longer.

Or that forgiveness for his sins and shortcomings can be had by man through eating and drinking, were it even the body and blood of the God he worshipped?

Let every man answer this query for himself. If he have not been crippled in his capacity to judge aright by a vicious education, or have not naturally a soft part in his head, he will only be able to answer it in one way. The more advanced among the Jews themselves indeed must, in later times, have come to the conclusion at which all reasonable men, whether Jew or Gentile, have now arrived, when we find one of their more advanced writers addressing them in such words as these:—"For what, O man, does Jehovah require of thee but to do justly and to love

mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah vi. 8).

Can we, however, suppose that God gives commands at one time which he abrogates at another ?

God is the changeless and eternal : the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is man who changes, makes and unmakes, orders and annuls, not knowing his mind from one hour to another.

What, then, conclude as to these minute commands about slaying and burning, anointing with oil and sprinkling with blood, roasting, seething, and eating in the holy place, &c., &c. ?

That very certainly they never came from God ; and that the men who maintain that they do are either possessed of the moral and intellectual obliquity of vision that leads astray, or are chargeable with the blindness that comes of wilfulness.

Certain ordinances follow concerning the various kinds of sacrifice that were to be offered, and the times and seasons at which particular rites were to be observed ?

A bullock is ordered to be offered daily for a sin offering and for an atonement ; two lambs also, day by day throughout the year, one in the morning, the other in the evening ; these last being presented apparently as a kind of daily ration to Jehovah : Anthropomorphosing God, man imagined that God must be fed like himself.

In this case flesh meat required the addition of bread ?

Which is not forgotten any more than a measure of wine to flavour the repast. Twelve cakes of unleavened bread baked of wheaten flour, with olive oil, seasoned with salt and spice, were to be duly laid with each recurring Sabbath morn upon the table which stood beside the altar of sacrifice, the stale cakes being then removed for the use of the priests, whose perquisite they were.

There is also a special altar of Incense, the Jewish Jehovah being held to delight in other and to human nostrils sweeter scents than the smell of burning fat, flesh, and blood ?

This altar, ordered to be overlaid with pure gold, was to stand by the Ark of the Testimony, before the Mercy Seat. On it Aaron was to burn sweet incense every morning when he dressed the lamps, and at even also, when he lighted them; for there it was that Jehovah was to be met with and "give the children of Israel to know that he was Jehovah their God, and that he dwelt among them."

Are we not to think that God is the God of All the inhabitants of the earth, and that he dwells not here or there, in a tent or tabernacle, seated on the lid of a coffer, but has his habitation in the universe ?

Our reason and philosophy assure us of so much; but the children of Israel and their teachers did not think so; and they who accept their annals as from God are bound in consistency to agree with them; an obligation, however, with which we see the world feeling it every day more and more difficult to comply.

"When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel, says the text, then shall every man give a ransom for his soul (life) unto Jehovah, that there be no plague among them." The price to be paid as insurance of their lives against pestilence being ?

Half a shekel of the sanctuary, the rich giving no more, the poor no less.

Such an ordinance must surely point to a time when the Israelites were a settled community, not to one when they were wanderers in the wilderness, and at starvation point ?

No doubt of it; and the order, now seen in this light by every competent and candid critic, proclaims the relatively modern date not only of the writing, but of the institution of the festival itself; for neither in Exodus (xxiii. 14), nor in Deuteronomy (xvi.),

where the festivals of the year are particularly commanded, do we find any mention made of an atonement festival. It cannot even have been known to Ezekiel (xlv. 18), the festivals of the Seventh month of which he speaks being mere repetitions of those of the First month, and the word *Atonement* does not occur in his text. The great day of the year to the Jews of Post-Exilic times, consequently, was unknown to the Israelites who lived before the Babylonian Captivity.

Is it reasonable, however, to suppose that man can ransom his life, atone for his sins, or make an offering to God by means of a piece of money ?

It is most unreasonable to think that he can. Man can approach God in no way save by studying to know and religiously obeying his laws. The money price was a recent tax for the support of the religious establishment of the country : "thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." There could obviously be neither numbering nor taxing of a horde wandering in the wilderness, and having no tabernacle of the congregation with numerous attached officials to maintain.

There were to be lavers of brass for the ministering priests to wash in—furniture most essential, considering the bloody work in which they were habitually engaged. The oil used in anointing or consecrating was also to be prepared in a particular manner with oil olive, myrrh, and cassia ; it was a holy anointing oil, not to be imitated nor put upon a stranger under penalty of death. The confection for burning on the altar of incense also, composed of sweet spices and frankincense, was to be prepared after the art of the apothecary, and was to be accounted holy to Jehovah ; whosoever should make any like it, or who should even "smell thereto," was to be cut off from his people.

Can we, we ask yet again, as reasonable beings, believe that instructions for such trifles as these were ever given by the great God of Nature to mankind?

No, no, no!

Or that he should threaten death to the man who smelled at a compound of spice and frankincense?

Never!

And can the book in which such commandments are propounded as coming from God either be, or by possibility be conceived to contain, the word of his will to man?

It is impossible to think that it can, when viewed in connection with the Idea we are now privileged to form of God. All that is said in the book before us on the topics in question is, however, in perfect conformity with the Idea which the legendary Moses, and generations long after Moses and his age, may be presumed to have entertained of their God, who was in no wise the impartial parent of the universe, but the partial God of the children of Israel; not the God who makes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike, but a capricious despot who guided the sunbeam and the shower at his arbitrary will and pleasure on those he favoured or had in despite.

How could the Israelites, so lately slaves to the Egyptians, be supposed to have had among them workmen possessed of skill to prepare the materials and execute the details of the apparatus ordered for use in the worship of their God?

We can only conceive them short-handed in this respect; still Jehovah, according to the text, informs Moses that he had called Bezaleel, the son of Uri, and filled him with the wisdom to contrive cunning works in silver, and gold, and brass, in cutting and setting precious stones, and in carving timber, and had given him Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan, to help him, beside

others, wise-hearted, though unnamed, and filled with the wisdom necessary to make all as commanded.

It is somewhat difficult, nevertheless, to imagine gold- and silver-smiths, lapidaries and engravers in jasper and calcedony, carvers, gilders, weavers, upholsterers, and the like, at work in the midst of a starving multitude of fugitives from slavery, locked in by a howling wilderness, and in want of the merest necessaries of life?

It is certainly difficult to think of arts that only belong to settled and peaceful communities being carried on under such circumstances.

Whence we conclude?

That all these instructious are the work of relatively modern times, and that so much of the Pentateuch as embodies them, as it cannot be from Moses, so neither can it be from any document derived from his age. The writer lived after the age of Solomon and had the temple as a model from which he drew, and the skilled Phœnician artizans who built and ornamented it—Hiram of Tyre and his assistants, as types of Bezaleel, the son of Uri, and Aholiab of the tribe of Dan. Even in times when the Chaldæans and Assyrians were policied peoples—astronomers, artizans, &c., and using engraved cylinders as seals in their dealings with one another, the intaglio of the cylinder is not *cut* by the lapidary's wheel of later days, but by *scratching* with some point harder than jasper or cornelian.*

Moses must have been some considerable time away whilst receiving all the minute instructions said to have been given him by Jehovah on the mountain?

He was absent, according to the record, for forty days and forty nights, and is said neither to have eaten bread nor drunk water during all that time—

* See Landseer, 'Sabæan Researches.'

a statement sufficient of itself to stamp the entire narrative as mythical; for as by God's eternal fiat man must eat and drink that he may live, so fasting from solid and liquid food cannot be continued for more than a very few days without serious derangement to the health, and, if persisted in for any much longer term, without death ensuing as the penalty.

A very notable incident occurs during the absence of Moses in the Mount?

The people come to Aaron and say: Up! make us Gods to go before us; for as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt we wot not what has become of him.

Is this a style of address likely to have been made to Aaron the Priest, the brother of Moses, the leader of the people?

A late writer might be supposed to speak in such terms—more respectfully couched, however,—for the information of his public; but the people about Aaron could scarcely have thought it necessary to remind him that it was Moses who had brought them out of Egypt; and they could not but have known that their leader was up in the mountain, in conference with Jehovah.

Aaron, however, remonstrates with the foolish people, and bids them think of all the wonders done for them by Jehovah, who still dwelt amid the cloud which only hid Moses from their sight upon the mountain?

He does nothing of the sort; assenting at once to the reasonableness of their clamour apparently, and familiar, as it might seem, with the worship of God under the figure of a Bull, he bids them bring him the rings of their wives and of their sons and daughters; and having made a molten calf of the gold, and fashioned it with a graving tool, he presents it to the people as the God who had brought them out of their Egyptian bondage! He does even more

than this; he builds an altar before the Image of the Bull-calf he has fashioned, and makes proclamation for the morrow of a feast "to the Lord!"

This is most extraordinary—altogether incomprehensible and incredible! Would the man who had witnessed and even taken an active part in the performance of the extraordinary wonders said to have been wrought in Egypt, and who could not but have felt assured of the continuing countenance of Jehovah, have acted as Aaron is now reported to have done?

It is impossible to believe that he would.

Would a brave man, a truly pious man, who put his trust in God through simple natural instinct, have done anything of the kind?

He would have suffered himself to be torn in pieces by the rabid multitude first.

What then conclude concerning the tale of the golden calf?

Either that it is a fabrication, contrived for a purpose which the writer has in view, or that Aaron is inadvertently allowed to appear as he probably was in fact—no priest of Jehovah, the spiritual conception of the late writer of the Pentateuch, but the minister of the God—El, Baal, Chiun, or Chamos, the true deity of the ancient Hebrew and other cognate semitic tribes—the God of Times and Seasons and Reproduction; the God who ceaselessly begetting ceaselessly devours his offspring, and whose visible image in the early ages of the world struggling from darkness into light was the Stone, the Tree, the Serpent, the Bull, and the universally recognised symbol of the reproductive power inherent in nature—the Phallus. The mythical Aaron, we must conclude, either presented the people with the image of the God with whose worship they were already familiar; or the late writer whose work we have before us—one of the Jehovistic Reformers, a priest of Judah, and living in or after the reign of Hezekiah—may have

invented the tale of the Golden Calf of the Wilderness for the purpose of proclaiming how abhorrent to Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was the Calf worship established by Jeroboam as the religion of his realm of Israel, which he had rent from the kingdom of Judah.

The people are well content with the Idol which Aaron has provided, and the feast he has promised?

They rise up early in the morning, and having made burnt and peace offerings to their Calf-God, they sit down to eat and to drink, give themselves up to merriment and the rites hallowed in the worship of the Nature-God, upon the particular character of which it is not necessary to speak more at large in this place.

What, according to the text, says Jehovah to Moses on the Mount, whilst all this is going on below?

“Get thee down,” says he, “for the people have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way I commanded them; they have made them a golden calf, and have worshipped it, and made offerings to it, and said: This is thy God, O Israel, which has brought thee out of the land of Egypt!”

It is Aaron the priest, however, who has just said so; but what more?

“Behold, this is a stiff-necked people; now, therefore, let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them.”

Jehovah would, apparently, have Moses restrain him from breaking out upon the people and consuming them. What answer does Moses make?

He beseeches Jehovah, and asks him why he should be wroth with the people and give the Egyptians occasion to say:—He brought them out for mischief, to slay them in the mountain and consume them from the face of the earth. “Turn from thy fierce wrath,” he continues, “and repent of this evil against thy

people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom thou swarest by thine own self and saidst, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and this land I have spoken of I will give to your seed to inherit it for ever."

What reply is the Jewish writer's Jehovah—generally accepted by Christians as the Omnipotent Creator of the Universe—made to give to this friendly remonstrance and reminder of the man Moses?

It certainly is not the God of Philosophy and Enlightened Piety who replies; it is the redactor of this Hebrew legend who speaks when he makes his God say that he "repents of the evil he thought to do to his people;" for God is not a man that he should repent, as a later and more advanced writer in the same heterogeneous collection of books and fragments of books has said of the Deity whom he, in better days, conceived.

Moses comes down from the mountain with the two tables of the law in his hand, the writing, we are informed, being on both sides, and the handy work of God himself. Coming near he hears shouting and uproar in the camp, which Joshua, who seems now to have joined him—although we have heard nothing of this before—mistakes for sounds of discord or war, but which Moses, with a truer ear and the intelligence he had from Jehovah, interprets as no sounds of strife but of mirth and rejoicing. Reaching the camp, he sees the Calf and the dancing; his anger is roused, and in his passion he casts the tables out of his hand and breaks them in pieces beneath the mount.

This last act was surely unbecoming in a great leader, as showing a lack of self-control, although his anger was natural enough. What does he with the Calf?

That, it is said, he burns in the fire, grinds to powder, strews it on water which he makes the people drink, and so compels them to swallow the God that Aaron had made for them.

Can Gold be burned into ashes in the fire, and strewed on water so that it may be drunk ?

Gold is unchangeable in any heat short of that which is centred in the electric spark, by which, if in leaf, it is dissipated in vapour. Gold, however, may be beaten out into leaves and then broken up into particles so fine as to be diffusible through liquids; but it cannot be reduced to powder by burning in a furnace; neither, indeed, can it be melted and cast into an image of any description save with means and appliances such as Aaron could not have commanded in the wilderness.

So much at least of the story must, therefore, be a product of the writer's imagination; even as must the information he gives, whereby we learn that the tables which Moses brake in his vexation were written on this side and on that by the finger of God himself, a fact—if by possibility it could have been a fact, and as involving an absurdity we unhesitatingly declare it could be none, the Supreme Cause not having fingers like a man—which the narrator could by no possibility have known ?

So much presents itself as certain to the unprejudiced mind.

Moses will, of course, be wroth with Aaron his brother for what he has done ?

So we should have expected; but there is little show of anger in the remonstrance he makes. "What," says he, in the mildest terms imaginable, where the most severe would have been so much in place, "did this people unto thee that thou hast brought this great sin upon them ?" A question to which Aaron can find no better reply than by begging my Lord, his brother, not to be angry with him, repeating the particulars of his reprehensible act, and declaring that, having cast the gold given him by the people into the fire "there came out this calf;" a miraculous image, therefore, that fell out of the fire, like

those we read of in Greek and Roman legends which fell from heaven! After this the subject is dropped in so far as Aaron, the chief offender, is concerned.

But not as regards the ignorant people who, by their doings, have roused the anger of Jehovah, and the still more significant wrath of their leader?

No, truly! For Moses seeing that the people were naked—"Aaron having," as it is said, "made them naked to their shame"—scant clothing or *nothing on* being the proper costume in the religious orgies of the earlier ages of the world—he takes his stand in the gate of the camp and says: "Who is on Jehovah's side, let him come unto me; when all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to him."

What order is given them in the name of Jehovah, the God of Israel?

A very terrible order indeed! "Put every man his sword by his side," says he, "and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour."

What! in spite of his having persuaded Jehovah to repent of the evil he had intended against his people?

So it appears by the report, which, though we may cling to the hope that it never had any foundation in fact, is nevertheless not entirely out of keeping with other horrible practices of barbarous man—the *custom* of the West Coast of Africa at the present time for example. "On that day it is said there fell of the people three thousand men! for Moses had said: 'Consecrate yourselves to-day to Jehovah, even every man upon his son and upon his brother, that he may bestow a blessing upon you this day!!!'"

And there are men with open eyes and accessible understandings among us who still maintain that human sacrifices were not only never offered to their God by the early Hebrews, but that they were even

abhorrent to the old Jewish mind ; that the firstborn of the sons and daughters of Israel were at all times redeemable by presentation at the Tabernacle to the priest and payment of the petty sum of five silver shekels of the sanctuary ?

Many men whose soundness of understanding, scholarly acquirements, critical acumen and candour can be implicitly relied on in all other directions, halt in this one, and become false to themselves and the great task they undertake of bringing light and proclaiming the truth. And how shall we, living near the end of this nineteenth century since Jesus of Nazareth, our brother, and Epictetus, and Antoninus, and Seneca, and Marcus Tullius, and so many others spoke their words of reason and of love and mercy to the world, imagine that God could ever have ordered the men who lived in any age to *consecrate themselves* and *earn his blessing* by the wholesale murder of naked, defenceless men, their sons, their brothers, their neighbours, and their friends ; or how continue to receive the record of such atrocities as the revealed word of God ?

How, indeed ! But such stories begin at length to be questioned even by the many ; the few—the really educated, the well informed, the rational, the merciful—have long rejected them as blasphemies, if there be any such ! against every conception which reasonable man can form of the Supreme NOT OURSELVES of a pious writer of the present day, by us called shortly God.

What have we in the way of assurance that the tale of this massacre cannot be founded on fact—cannot be true ?

The certainty that the Levites did not exist as a priestly caste—and the priestly character is implied in the sacrificial part they are here made to enact—in the age of Moses. Though pains are taken by the late writers and editors of the Pentateuch to refer

the connection of the Levites with sacred matters to the age of Moses, the Levitical Priesthood is satisfactorily ascertained to have been a relatively modern institution—certainly not to have existed until after the age of Solomon.

God, therefore, we must believe, never gave orders to Moses of the kind detailed ?

God speaks not and never spoke in human speech to man. We know not what amount of barbarity had place in the mind of the mythical Moses, but an order to slay ignorant men for yielding to the blind instincts of their nature and conforming to the usages of their forefathers very certainly never came from God.

What does Moses now ?

He tells the people that they had sinned a great sin, and full sorely have they been made to know and to pay for it ; but he adds that he will now go up to Jehovah and peradventure make atonement for their sin—speaking as if none had already been made through the three thousand lives sacrificed by his own orders !

What says Moses to Jehovah ?

Oh ! this people have sinned a great sin and made them gods of gold ; yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin [and here there seems to be a gap in the narrative, the terms Moses would make for the sinners being wanting], and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

What answer does he receive ?

“ Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book,” is the curt reply.

This surely cannot be the God whom men in the present day conceive and speak of as the loving father of all, ready to forgive the sin of whosoever repents and amends his ways ?

Certainly not ; he is the God of a still earlier age of the world even than that of the Jehovistic writer

whose work we have before us,—a God delighting in blood-stained altars, best pleased of all with human sacrifices, requiring the first-born of man and beast as burnt-offerings to himself, having his preferences and partialities, commanding the extermination of the peaceful and less powerful inhabitants of lands no longer in his gift, and making lavish promises of dominion, never attained, to a horde of barbarians arrogating to themselves the title of his peculiar people.

Jehovah, too, is represented as keeping a sort of debtor and creditor account against mankind, after the manner of things on earth; but we find no notice of the unwarranted use that had just been made of his name, and of the slaughter of the three thousand defenceless men in defiance of his own resolution, on remonstrance made to him, to abstain from the evil he had purposed against his people. Moses' order to the murderous Levites, however, was surely a crime of a far deeper dye than the people's sin—admitting for a moment that the worship of their God under the form of the Bull was a sin rather than an act of ignorance, harmless in itself, sanctioned by the high priest, and in conformity with immemorial usage among themselves?

There is no mention of anything of the kind; neither is Moses taken to task for having himself presumed to order the act of vengeance from which he had diverted his God. He is merely commanded to lead on towards the promised land. Jehovah, however, still angry! with his people, will not accompany them in person as usual; he will not trust himself among them, "lest he break forth on them and consume them by the way;" he will only send his angel with the host in his stead.

This cannot surely be any likeness of the one God, ruler of heaven and earth, with the conception of whom the Jews are generally credited?

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It is much rather the portrait of an irascible mortal not over-much possessed of self-control. It certainly has nothing in common with the IDEA of the Infinite, Ubiquitous Cause, which men of culture now apprehend under the name of God.

Though represented as not *breaking out* on the people at once, and consuming them on the spot, the Jehovah of the writer, we soon find, does not really forego his purpose of revenge; he does not truly keep his word to Moses, and "repent of the evil he had purposed against his people;" he rather, as it appears, abides by his resolution to blot them out of his book; for in striking contrast with his merciful purpose as previously announced, he now assures Moses that "the sins of the people shall be visited upon them." And the threat is not idle; for even as if nothing had already been done in the way of expiation or amends by the slaughter of the three thousand, Jehovah, we now learn, visits the people with a plague "because of the Calf which Aaron made."

Do not the poor people appear to us in these days rather to have needed instruction than merited plaguing for yielding to the error of their age and worshipping, under the form of a Calf or Bull, the unknown Something beyond themselves which their intuitive nature led them to divine, but which the knowledge of their age did not permit them to conceive aright?

As simply compassionate and considerate men we should assuredly say so. And there is indeed excuse as ample for the efforts of early man by *personification* to obtain something like a definite conception of his Deity as there is now nothing to be said for those who still insist on speaking of God as a Person. Modern theologians do, in fact, fall into the same error as the ancient Hebrews when they speak of a personal God; for a Person is an Entity among other entities, limited in space, having length, breadth,

and thickness,—in other words, having a Form of some sort. But figure God as he may, and in the noblest fashion he can imagine, man's Image of God must still be as far from having any *similitude* to the Supreme as was the golden Calf of the idolatrous Israelites.

Referring to the later history of the Jewish people—the split that took place between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, their mutual jealousies, animosities, disastrous wars, and the coarsely expressed hostility of the Jehovistic religious party of Jerusalem to the worship of any other than the conception of Deity under the name of Jehovah, to which the leading minds among them had attained,—may we not infer a motive for the invention of such a story as that of the Golden Calf and the slaughter that followed its worship?

The tale may almost certainly be said to have been composed after the reign of Solomon, its purpose being as certainly to show the terrible consequences that followed the desertion of Jehovah, the God of Judah, for such Gods as Jeroboam, King of Israel, set up for his subjects in Sechem and Dan.*

Jehovah, then, all in renewing his promises of giving the people possession of the land flowing with milk and honey, having driven out its present occupants the Amorites, Hivites, Hittites, and others from before them, will not trust himself to go in their midst as heretofore, lest enraged by their perversity and stiff-neckedness he break out and consume them by the way—how does Moses proceed?

He pitches the Tabernacle without the camp, and whilst all the people stand at their tent doors, he himself enters the structure, and it comes to pass, says the text, that the cloudy pillar descends and stands

* See Bernstein: 'On the Origin of the Legends of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' one of Mr Scott's series of papers, of great interest.

at the Tabernacle door. "And Jehovah talked with Moses," speaking to him "face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend."

How could so vast a multitude as the Israelites are said to have been, have stood at their tent doors within sight of the Tabernacle, and seen Moses enter it to have a colloquy with Jehovah ?

How, indeed, seeing that they were millions in number. But have we the matter of the conversation ?

We have—from the writer, understood. Moses entreats Jehovah not to desert them, and reminds him (!) that the people are his people. "Is it not in that thou goest with us that it shall be known that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight, and so are separated from all the people that are on the face of the earth ?"

Does Jehovah yield to the remonstrance of the man ?

He does. The foolish mortal whose words we have here, presuming to speak in the name of his God, proceeds: "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken ; for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name."

Moses, presuming apparently on this compliant mood of his God, makes another request as a kind of personal favour : "I beseech thee," he says, "show me thy glory." To which Jehovah, according to the text, replies : "I will make all my goodness pass before thee ; I will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy ;" but "thou canst not see my face ; for there shall no man see me and live. Behold there is a place by me ; thou shalt stand upon a rock ; and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by ; and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts."

All this is worse than childish—it is absurd—altogether unworthy even to have been imagined, much more to have been reduced to terms by man gifted with reason. How shall the Omnipresent God, immanent in the yet farther than the farthest of the fixed stars plunged in the depths of endless space as in the point therein that is filled by the mote on which we dwell, be conceived of as shrunk to the limits of a person, communing in human speech with an inquisitive man as with his fellow, and showing him his back parts? God, let us be well assured, hides not his face, though it have no feature in common with the face of man, from him who reverently seeks to know and to hold communion with him. In the universe of things is God ever to be clearly seen, and in the changeless laws by which the wondrous fabric is upheld are his power and his providence ceaselessly made known. Perusing these man dies not, but rises ever into newness of life.

Have we not something analogous to this tale of Moses' curiosity in wishing to see the face of Jehovah in what is called the *heathen* to distinguish it from the *Hebrew* mythology?

We have. Hercules, urgent with Jupiter to be allowed to see his face, is long denied by the Father of Gods and men. But, yielding at length, Jove slays a Ram, wraps himself in the fleece, puts the head of the animal over his own as a mask, and so meets the Hero. Whilst it is extremely difficult to connect a meaning with the Hebrew myth, it is not difficult to read the mystery involved in the one we have from the Greeks. Herakles, the Sun, in his annual course through the Zodiac, is eager to arrive at the vernal equinox, whose sign in the olden days was the Ram, when, emerging from the inferior to the superior signs, he escapes from his wintery impotence to his summer power—from seeming death to renovated life. This old astrological myth, the later Jewish

writer, without understanding its meaning, has in all probability transferred to his pages, but so travestied as to leave it without the symbolical and poetical significance it had in its original shape.

After his interview with Jehovah in the Tabernacle and the vision he has whilst ensconced in the cleft of the rock, Moses receives fresh instructions?

He is commanded to hew two tables of stone like the first, on which, says Jehovah, "I will write the words that were in the first tables which thou breakest; and be ready in the morning and come up unto Mount Sinai?"

Moses does as he is commanded?

With the two tables of stone in his hand he ascends the mountain, and Jehovah, on his part, descends in a cloud and proclaims himself as "Jahveh-Elohim, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and fourth generation."

The former and the latter clauses of this communication do not very well agree?

Certainly they do not, and herein we have fresh assurance of the composite character of the text—evidence of the manipulation it has undergone and of the additions that have been made to it at different times. The merciful idea of one, and he, we may presume, the later writer, is utterly opposed to the revengeful and merciless conception of the other and, let us believe, the older hand. God the absolute, had he ever spoken—and we venture to say again that God never did speak in articulate sounds to man—could not in one breath have so mixed up mercy with far-reaching vengeance. We know the world is so constituted that all things with their being have in-

herent aptitudes which fit them for their states ; and it is in the exercise of these that sentient beings enjoy their lives, and that what is called the goodness of God finds its expression ; as, on the other hand, it is in contravention of the laws of Nature, which are the laws of God, that they bring down pains and penalties on themselves, and that that which must be held to be the righteous justice—never to be spoken of as the vengeance—of God is displayed.

God does not surely visit the sins of the fathers on their children ?

Never, in the sense in which the statement in the text is made and is meant to be understood. In conformity with *the laws of hereditary descent*, however, the children of vicious and immoral parents, as well as of those who have injured their health by indulgence and excess of any kind, are apt to be vicious and immoral, sickly and short-lived.

Jehovah renews the covenant he has already made at several times with Moses and the patriarchs, and declares his purpose of doing marvels such as have not been done in the earth before. He will drive out the inhabitants of the land to which he is leading his people, and they, on their part, are to destroy the altars of the natives, to break in pieces their images, and cut down their groves [Aschera—wooden pillars, typical of Astarte]. They are to worship no God other than Jehovah, “for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God ;” to make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land ; to make no sacrifices to their gods ; not to take of their daughters as wives or concubines for their sons ; to make no molten gods ; to keep the feast of unleavened bread ; and much besides, though it is mostly repetition of what has gone before, even to the seething of the kid in its mother’s milk ; the injunction as regards the first-born of man and beast being here accompanied by the interpolated clause authorising its redemption, in

contravention of the positive order elsewhere implemented, that it was Jehovah's unconditionally, and that whatsoever was *cherem* or devoted to Jehovah "was surely to be put to death." How long does Moses remain in the mountain on this second visit?

Forty days and forty nights, of course, forty being the sacred number; and under the same impossible conditions as before, without meat or drink during all that time.

There is something remarkable about Moses when he comes down from the mountain?

"The skin of his face shone," it is said, "though he wist it not." The people being afraid to come near him, he puts on a veil whilst speaking with them, which he only removes when he goes in to commune with Jehovah.

What may be the meaning of this?

It were hard to say, unless it be that Moses is occasionally made to take the place of his God, as he certainly at times shows himself the more placable and considerate of the two,—than which nothing can be conceived more absurd; or it may be that, coming from the great presence in which he is said to have stood, he is represented as shedding physical as well as metaphysical light; whence the shining of his face and the need of the veil; hence, too, the horns, typical of rays of light, with which the sculptor and painter have felt themselves authorised to ornament his brow.

These extraordinary particulars appear to turn Moses into a wholly mythical personage?

Assimilating him as they do in so remarkable a manner with the Dionysos, or Bacchus, of the Pagan Mythology. He, as well as Moses, is born in Egypt, and the birth of each is concealed for a time, to escape the hostility of a royal personage. Both are exposed in an ark or cradle on the Nile, and are alike rescued by a king's daughter. Both lead a host to victory—Dionysos in India, Moses in Palestine—

with a rout of women and children among them. Both walk dryshod through seas and rivers, which part at the word of command; and both draw water from the rock by striking it with a magic rod. Both have one of their names, at least, from Water—*Mou*, in Egyptian, signifying water,—the Hebrew leader being called Mouses, and the heathen god *Myses*. Dionysos, moreover, like Moses, has the predicate Legislator, Thesmophoros; and both are represented as horned,—Dionysos being characterised as Taurokeros, Bull-horned, and Moses, as just said, being familiarly represented with horns upon his forehead. As the heathen god, to conclude, was styled Luaios and Liber, the *Free*, the *Freer*, so is Moses the *Deliverer*; and if Dionysos have several proper names, so has Moses,—Manetho informing us that he was known as Osarsiph and Tisithes; Osarsiph being no other than Osiris, and Tisithes, *i.e.* Seth, the sacred name of Sirius, the star whose heliacal rising regulated the Egyptian year and symbolised its God.

Is there not something like inconsistency in the circumstances amid which the *Tables* of the Law are at length delivered to Moses, and the fact that the *Law* itself—in so far, at least, as the decalogue is concerned—has been already imparted, with every possible impressive adjunct,—Mount Sinai quaking and being all of a smoke, thunder bellowing, lightning flashing about its crown, and loud and long-breathed trumpet-blasts coming out of the cloud that hung about it?

It might be said, with great show of truth, that the account we have of the delivery of these Tables is but another version, and by another hand, of the delivery of The Law at large—many of the heads of the Decalogue following in the part of the text that is now before us, such as the commandment to have no God but Jehovah, to make no molten images, and to rest on the seventh day. To these, however, are appended

many other injunctions, some momentous, many indifferent, but all alike left out of the Eclectic Summary under the Ten heads which we presume we owe to the more practised and much later writer of the Twentieth Chapter. Among the number of these additional commandments is the order to keep the feasts of unleavened bread and of weeks, of first-fruits and the in-gathering of the year's increase at the year's end; to appear thrice in the year before Jahveh-Elohim, the Elohim (God) of Israel; not to offer the blood of his sacrifices with leaven; to leave nothing of the feast of the passover until the morning; and not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk—a procedure that must have had a significance to the Israelites which we fail to discover.

Besides these, there is the important reminder that all that opens the womb, whether of man or beast, ox or sheep, that is a male, is Jehovah's; the firstling of an ass, however, being ordered exceptionally either to be redeemed with a lamb or to be put to death by having his neck broken. What Jehovah's objection to receive the firstling of the ass may have been we do not learn from the Hebrew scriptures. From other sources of information, however, we know that the ass was one of the animals sacred to the Egyptian Typhon, the God in his adverse aspect; and that the mode of sacrifice of the animal to him was that precisely which is commanded in the Hebrew text,—it was thrown down from a height, and so killed or had its neck broken. The first-born son of the human kind, is now ordered to be redeemed, and none are to appear before Jehovah empty.

The redemption clauses, where they occur, we have already seen reason to conclude, must have been added subsequently to the original requisition for the first-born?

When we observe that the text in several other places has nothing about redemption, that this is in

direct contradiction to antecedent positive requirements, and that denunciations against the practice of child-sacrifice are of frequent occurrence in the writings of the later prophets,* we shall find no reason to doubt that inasmuch as the first-born of man, being males, are now ordered to be redeemed, so were they in former times, and as the rule, sacrificed on the altar of El, Bel or Baal-Molech, the proper God of the early Hebrew people and no other than Saturn, the chief God of the Semitic race.

So much for the Book of the Exodus; all that follows after the thirty-fifth chapter, to which we have now arrived, containing little or nothing but repetitions of what has been already minutely set forth in the chapters from the twenty-first to the thirty-fourth inclusive.

The whole of this concluding part of the Book has been held by two esteemed Jewish critics and scholars to be the composition of a writer who lived not earlier than from the 270th to the 260th year before the Christian æra.† The text of these chapters, however, being referred by Kuehnen to the Book of the Origins, and given by Dr Davidson to the Elohist, may, possibly, be as old as the earlier portions of the Book which treat of the same matters. But questions of age and authorship do not greatly, and at every turn, interest us here, engaged as we chiefly are with the moral aspects of the subject, and

* To quote a single instance from the Prophets: "They built the high places in Tophet, in the valley of the sons of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire." (Jerem. vii. 31.) The restriction of the sacrifice to males appears even to have been a late addition. All that opened the matrix, whether male or female, was doubtless the original form.

† See Kalisch, 'Hist. and Crit. Comment. on the Old Testament: Exodus and Leviticus;' and Popper, 'Die biblische Bericht über die Stiftshütte.' 8vo. Leipz. 1862.

the possibility of receiving it as the veritable word of God to man. That Exodus comprises some of the most ancient records of the Hebrew myths and legislative enactments that have reached us, is unquestionable. Down to the thirty-fifth chapter it is, in the main, very certainly older than every part of the Book of Genesis, and has been presumed to have been compiled and put together about the beginning of the seventh century before Christ—a thousand years after the age of Moses, but both added to and altered in still more recent times. How can we, in truth, as reasonable men, imagine Moses surrounded by the Israelites in the desert calling to him Bezaleel and Aholiab, and others, cunning workers in gold and silver and precious stones, weavers, dyers, embroiderers, tanners, with a host of artificers besides, and setting them to carry out the minute instructions he is said to have received from Jehovah for making the Tent or Tabernacle, the Ark of the Testimony, the Altars of burnt offering and Incense, the Table of the Showbread, &c., &c.,—the surfaces of these last being ordered to be overlaid with pure gold (when they are not to be wholly composed of this precious metal), the cherubim all of beaten gold, the seven-light lampstand with its knobs, branches, lamps, snuffers and snuffer dishes, all also of pure gold; the hangings of fine twined linen—scarlet, purple, and blue—interlaced with gold, fastened to pillars having chapiters overlaid with silver by means of hooks of the same precious and, in the olden time, little known metal, &c., &c.,—as we find matters set forth with wearisome prolixity and iteration in this concluding part of the book of Exodus?

It is not possible to do so. The people, according to the record, were only kept from starving by miraculous showers of manna (which we feel certain never fell from heaven, though it may then have been, as it still is, scantily produced at a particular season by

the thorny mimosa that lives a dwarfed existence in many parts of the desert), and flights of quails, which still arrive in Egypt, Palestine, and other lands at certain times of the year. How could a community so circumstanced have had the apparatus—furnaces, crucibles, moulds, lathes, looms, saws, planes, dye-stuffs, tan-pits, and the hundred other implements and appliances indispensable to workers in wood, metal, and precious stones, in wool, flax, and leather? The Israelites were never mechanics or mechanicians. So late as the age of Saul they had not a blacksmith among them, but sent their ploughshares and coulters to their neighbours, the Philistines, to be sharpened. If this be true their early battles could have been fought with no better arms than clubs; in the days of the Judges, Samgar is said to have used an ox-goad, and Samson so primitive a weapon as the jaw-bone of an ass, in the mythical combats in which so many hundreds or thousands of the enemy complacently suffered themselves to be slaughtered by these heroes of the imagination—even so late as the age of Solomon artificers had to be brought from Tyre to plan and build the Temple! The whole of the tales about Moses' laws and constructions are beyond all question the creation of writers who lived long, very long, after the age of the great leader—men who had seen settled life, and must be presumed to have had not only the First but the Second Temple as the model from which they drew.

It was not very long, according to the record, after the Exodus, before the Tent or Tabernacle, the Ark and Altars, with their furniture complete, were set up and ready for inauguration?

No more than a year: "On the First day of the First month of the Second year after quitting Egypt," all being in order, the ceremony of Inauguration was performed. The lamps having been lighted, incense sublimated, and burnt offerings presented, "a cloud,"

it is said, descended and covered the Tent, and the Glory of Jehovah filled the Tabernacle.

This is but a short time, all things else considered ?

Were so much accomplished by the end of the first year or beginning of the second, it becomes by so much the more difficult to imagine what the Israelites could have been about during the remaining thirty-eight or rather thirty-nine years said to have been spent by them as wanderers in the wilderness. From the inauguration of the Tabernacle the history of the people is a blank until we meet with them making an attempt, in which they were foiled, to penetrate Palestine proper on the side of Moab. Forty years, however,—*forty* being the sacred number and indispensable in the narrative—had to be got over, and the historian—or shall we say the *poet*—uses them in a series of marchings and counter-marchings, to and fro, from one imaginary station or camping-place to another, with ever-recurring miraculous interpositions of Jehovah to keep the people from dying of hunger and thirst, and repeated murmurings and rebellions on their part, not without good reason as it seems ;—eight or nine-and-thirty years are consumed in getting over ground that, with every allowance for contingencies in the shape of delays, difficulties, necessary halts, &c., could easily have been left behind in something less than eighteen months after quitting Sinai, by a horde numerically great as it is possible to imagine the Israelites to have been, if they managed to live even for a year in the wilderness.*

The Book of the Exodus ended, and the apparatus for the ceremonial worship of the sons of Israel complete, we now come to the minute instructions for

* Goethe—*Nihil quod non tetegit*, &c.—has discussed this subject in a very complete manner in his notes to the better understanding of his West-East Divan : *Zum bessern Verständniss des West-Ostlichen Divan : Israel in der Wüste.*

carrying it into practice, these being especially comprised in the next Book of the Series—Leviticus—although many points have already fallen under our notice in the book that engages us. The ceremonial worship of the Jews, however, interests us little in the present age; it had even in most particulars ceased to interest the better minds among themselves some considerable time before their disruption and dispersion as a people. Its practice has long since and necessarily been abandoned in many of its most imposing elements by the modern Jew, the dweller in every inhabited land beneath the sun where there is a living to be made by petty or more liberal traffic, money-dealing, and the like. The record of such a system of religious observance, the outcome of the blind religious sense, indeed, could have no real interest apart from the tale it unfolds of the childish beliefs and barbarous acts mistakenly held good and acceptable to God in an early age of the world's history, were it not for the influence it has had on the religious ideas and religious practices of the most civilised among the peoples of the earth. There is now no longer any slaughter of bullocks and rams, goats and turtle-doves, before the Image of Jehovah at the door of the Tabernacle or Temple, no burning of fat and flesh to make what was regarded as a sweet savour to Jehovah, no longer the lamb at morning and at evening as his daily ration, nor the show-bread as its complement and the measure of wine as the indispensable drink offering! The terms of the later Jewish legislation may even be said to have made the continuance of the sacrificial and ceremonial system of earlier days, entitled Mosaic or Levitical, impossible. By the modern reformed code sacrifice could only be performed in *one* place, and that Jerusalem, and at one altar—that of the Temple—an ordinance which may have been devised in view of the Jewish people scattered over the face of the globe, and

announced as a means of getting rid of the blood-stained rites of the earlier system.

The worship of God by the descendants of the ancient Hebrews has indeed been long purified from almost everything that can offend the reasonable religious views of the cultivated in the present age; and it might even seem that there was a possible future for the Jehovism professed by the most advanced and enlightened of their later writers. Could the Jews but abandon the insolent and indefensible idea of their being, or ever having been, in any sense, the peculiar people of God; discard the barbarous rite of circumcision as a necessity of their initiation; cease to think of any kind of wholesome aliment as otherwise than clean, and of bullocks and sheep as food unfit for them unless slaughtered in a certain way by one of themselves, they would have done away with almost all that keeps them *Parias* in the midst of the enlightened among European communities. The last named silly prejudice in particular given up, one great bar to a good social understanding between Jew and Gentile would be removed; and until it is removed no perfectly good understanding can be come to between them, for must not my brother eat of the same mess and drink of the same cup as myself! If so much be ever accomplished, the descendants of the ancient Hebrew stock will have made a greater stride in the Religious Idea than did their fathers when they forsook the worship of Baal-Peor, Moloch, and Astarte, gave up eating with the blood (eating raw flesh) on High-places, and ceased to celebrate the orgies of the Phœnician Venus in booths and under the shade of green trees. Comporting themselves in all respects as reasonable beings, they would possibly find that, instead of being looked on as subjects for the proselytising zeal of ignorant, bigoted, and presumptuous men and women to wreak itself hopelessly upon, they might,

without themselves coming under the influence of any such bad passion, discover that adherents to the simple theism they professed were to be won from among their uncircumcised neighbours, more piously minded than the mass, but lacking the capacity to believe that God had ever cursed the world, or contrived matters so indifferently as to make its redemption necessary by appearing in human shape to be a propitiatory sacrifice to himself. The people of England spend a million a-year in missions and futile efforts to convert the Jew and the heathen to Christianity,—whence may the mission come that shall convert them from the unworthy ideas of the Supreme they entertain, and teach them the eternal laws he has ordained for the rule of their lives, of the earth they inhabit, and of the infinite Universe of which they and it are so small and insignificant a part !

