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us from the beginning of the world, from the very moment in which sin began to reign; and assured by One who is Himself the very Soul of goodness and the Fountain whence it flows; One who foresaw that very conflict between the two, and those apparent occasional victories of evil which cause us to doubt. It is still further assured to us by those partial, but present and growing, victories which we see and admire in the good men of every Church and age. And most of all is it assured to us by the complete victory of Him who became as we are in this world, that we might be like Him both in this world and in the world to come, and share in his triumph over evil and all its works. The past, the present, the future, all shed influences of courage and hope upon us, and bid us be faithful that we too may bruise Satan under our feet shortly. And with such a stedfast and growing light of hope as this, a light which dawned in Adam's Gospel, has already spread into the day and reign of Christ, and is to culminate in the new day of a new heaven and a new earth, who need tremble or despair? By hope, by *this* hope, are we saved.

S. Cox.

JACOB'S PILLAR.

GENESIS xxviii. 18.

THIS is the earliest recorded instance—possibly the earliest actual instance—of a practice which grew to be in one shape or another wellnigh universal. In what it first originated there is nothing to shew; most probably in some traditional example, and perhaps therefore in this very act on the part of Jacob. It is easy to see that in the East rude stone memorials would be at once the readiest and most durable to erect. Coupled with this is the allowed

fact that blocks of stone[1] always attract attention in Oriental countries. Nor need it be thought strange or singular if among nomad races in primitive times, races at once observant and contemplative, habitually traversing barren wastes and trackless steppes marked by no sign of life, even a dumb stone were an object of curiosity and regard, especially if it bore signs of having been visited or set up by previous travellers, or if it served as a landmark of distance or direction. Morier relates in his travels through Persia that, when he unwittingly disturbed a stone heap, his guides warned him that it was a bad omen, and that it was a rule with travellers to preserve, if not to add to, any heap that they passed. What, therefore, we find in Scripture admits of wide illustration outside Scripture. Stones and heaps of stone were monuments of religious veneration, of formal covenants, of military marches, of victories, of burial places. There are the historic pillars of Sesostris, the fabulous pillars of Hercules; the cippus at one river, the stones at another, one for every soldier, heaped by Darius in his march through Thrace; there is the Homeric column at the tomb of Sarpedon, and the stones on the grave of Hector. The religious use soon degenerated into superstition, and this contributed to popularize and spread the custom. Pausanias mentions *rude stones*[2] as the gods of early Greece. Druidism is essentially an Oriental system; the Celts and Cymri were Asiatic in origin, and wherever they roamed, westward or northward, they set up their dolmens, cromlechs, and megalithic memorials of death or monuments of worship. Stone worship found its way to Scotland and Ireland. Dr. Geikie states that sacred stones, called Bætylia, were worshipped in Phrygia and Syria and Egypt. Lucian, in his Charon, speaks of crowning and anointing sepulchral stones. Herodotus speaks of an

[1] *Hajars*, *abens*, or *ebens*. See note in *Speaker's Commentary*, on 1 Kings i. 9.
[2] ἀργοὶ λίθοι. *Lib.* 7.

Arabian compact as ratified by drawing blood from the hands and smearing it on seven stones. Lucian's witness tallies with that of Christian writers in the same and following centuries, who speak of λίθοι ἐμψύχοι (λ. λιπάροι), *lapis lubricatus*. And more than one Christian Council has denounced the worship of trees and stones.

The reference to these various uses indicates the general tendency. The old stem of religion threw out many spreading offshoots of superstition; unhealthy suckers from the parent root.

But it is not right that these things should be read between the lines of the plain ancient narrative of Holy Scripture. The plain outline may tempt imaginative colouring. There is a border land of right and wrong. Actions, neutral in appearance, will vary in moral principle and value according to the side from which the impulse comes.

The devotion of Jacob, like that of his grandfather Abraham, has been in modern times confounded with superstitions of an after growth.

For example, the Scriptural notices of Abraham are consistent and clear. There is no question in the Mosaic history, no question in the Christian comment (Heb. xi. 17), but that the sacrifice of Isaac was an act of faith and obedience, laudable in itself, and approved by God. And the uniform temper of faith displayed by Abraham, and the amplitude of revelations which guided the whole course of his conduct, are in perfect keeping with this colouring of the inspired record. But these considerations are ignored without scruple by some writers, who find in that unparalleled submission no self-surrender to God, but only the infection of a "fierce Syrian superstition."[1] I hold this imputation to be against reason, and beyond all justifiable latitude of interpretation. And the case of Jacob is

[1] R. Williams, in *Essays and Reviews*.

analogous. His action as related in the Scripture appears as one of pure faith and simple piety. Nor is it discredited by any admission that his memorial and his dedication of it were eventually copied and corrupted. And when it is said that "stones were the fetishes of primitive Semitic races,"[2] it is in a measure begging the question to allege for them so high an antiquity. In the natural process of things the true use precedes the abuse; if a system develops into superstition, that is no ground for imputing perversion at the source. But it is something more than begging the question to say that "Jacob transferred the name (sc. Bethel), from the stone to the place." The plain statement of the history is that "*Jacob took the stone . . . set it up . . . poured oil on it . . . called that place Bethel,*" and crowned his action by a vow that, if he returned in peace, the stone should be God's house, or a Bethel. He is at a later date reminded of this in a Divine vision (Gen. xxxv. 1, 7): "*Go up to Bethel, and make there an altar: . . . and he built there an altar, and called the place El-bethel.*" There is no hint that Bethel was recognized as a name for a stone; but to a mind habitually devout, no name could be fitter for the place where God had personally revealed Himself. We read in Chapter xxxi. 45, "*And Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar.*" Was that stone a Bethel? "*Jacob called it Galeed.*" Or was the similar pillar at Rachel's grave (Chap. xxxv. 20) a Bethel? An unbiassed view of the documentary terms must surely lead to the conclusion, not that Jacob adopted idolatrous names or usages, but that he expressed his sense of the Divine Presence by a natural descriptive title for the place, and marked it by an equally natural memorial. He might use a like memorial as witnessing a covenant, or perpetuating the remembrance of the dead; but this sacred name was reserved for the spot where he had seen God. I claim for

[2] *Prof. Cheyne*, on Isaiah lvii. 6.

Jacob independence of all superstition, whether existing or subsequent: I contend that he knew the name Bethel only in its proper and sacred sense; and that his act of simple faith is no more to be confounded with the false cultus which may have been developed out of it, than the act of Moses in setting up the Brazen Serpent is to be identified with the corrupt worship paid to it in the days of Hezekiah. It is clear that the approval of God was given to what Jacob said and did; it seems that Jacob on his death-bed recurs to the fact, when (assuredly without any tinge of misbelief) he makes *the stone* a symbol of the Shepherd of Israel.

Symbols, or memorials of worship, may easily, with the untaught multitude, pass into objects of worship. How soon such perversion sprang up may be gathered from the Mosaic law. The prohibitions in Leviticus xxvi. 1, in Deuteronomy xvi. 22, indicate the temptation to them. But it is to be observed that these prohibitions are not absolute. Pillars, such as the Israelites were cautioned against, such as they were to destroy among the heathen (Deut. vii. 5), were lawfully erected by Moses around the altar of God (Exod. xxiv. 4). Isaiah, in forecast of the overthrow of paganism in Egypt, foretells "*an altar to the Lord . . . and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord*" (Chap. xix. 19). *Abusus non tollit usum.* The prohibitions which imply a tendency toward abuse, sanction a true use. It was the same with the law as to high places; that law was not absolute, but conditional. It was the same with the law enjoining one place only of worship, which, however, admitted of altars being resorted to elsewhere. (See the notes in the *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. i. pp. 642 and 844.)

Mention has been made above of the Bætylia, a word whose origin and meaning are perhaps equally doubtful. Prof. Cheyne (on Isaiah lvii. 6) considers it a Phœnician form of Bethel with a Greek termination. Dr. Geikie

derives it from an assumed Phœnician deity named Batulos. But the only authority for this seems to be the fragment of Sanchoniathon in Eusebius; and that is confessedly a forgery. The mythic and composite character of its Theogony may be judged of by the following (summarized) specimen: The dynasty of gods sprang from the marriage of *οὔρανος* and *γή*. Their four sons were Ilus (=Cronus), Betulus, Dagon, Atlas. Ilus, by aid of allies called *ἐλωείμ*, gained the supremacy. Dagon became *Ζεὺς ἀρότριος*. Ilus *περιέχωσεν* (heaped a mound over) Atlas on the earth. Then, passing over Betulus, he is said to have invented *Βαιτύλια λίθους ἐμψύχους μηχανησάμενος*. Here we have the word in question; but such wild mythology proves nothing. Is any connexion traceable between Phœnicia and Bethel? Bethel was no depot of commerce, and lay in no marked traffic route. If again it is true that Bætylia was originally used of dolmens and the like, how came the Phœnicians to have the word without the thing? For Mr. Fergusson, in his *Rude Stone Monuments*, tells us there are no dolmens in Phœnicia, though they abound in Palestine.

The simplest account of the matter is perhaps supplied by Bochart, when he quotes Damascius to shew that those "animated stones" were aerolites. If such was the first meaning of Bætylia, the derivation of the name from Bethel, whether accurate or not, is intelligible. For meteoric stones were invested in the popular idea with something of sanctity, and gave rise to the legends of *διοπετῆ ἀγάλματα*. The Black Stone of the Kaaba at Mecca is an instance in point, if it is rightly described by a modern traveller as having all the appearance of an aerolite crusted by age.

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