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THE POLEMIC AGAINST IDOLATRY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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NO religion claiming possession of a divine revelation can afford to be tolerant. When the law of Moses embodied in the Deuteronomic Code was brought to Josiah king of Judah in 621 B. C., an inspired charter was granted to a nation for the first time, so far as we know. Then and there Judaism was born, and the former tolerance of foreign cults gave way to unyielding condemnation. Here was the oracle of God through Moses; there the sins, errors and blindness of heathenism.

Idolatry necessarily became a paramount issue. The use of images had never been condemned as the most repulsive apostasy. After the promulgation of Deuteronomy imageless worship became gradually, in the eyes of the masses, the distinguishing trait of Judaism. This date naturally divides the history of idolatry in Old Testament times into three periods: before 621; from 621 to 520; after 520.

1. *Idolatry before the Deuteronomic Reform.*

In the extant Hebrew literature prior to 621 B. C. poems and laws (for the latter, see below note 35) contain no reference to idolatry; the other writings may be roughly divided into narrative and prophetic.

The *J Document* in its present form betrays no knowledge of sacred images; nor does it mention artificial cultic objects of any kind. The nearest approach to such things are a heap

of stones¹ and the menhirs of Gilgal²: these together with crude altars constituted the ritual paraphernalia of prehistoric times.

The idols of our *E Document* are small private images, perhaps a sort of *lares et penates*, the **תַּרְסִים**.³ Stone pillars of rugged appearance are the only symbols of the divine presence whose use in the worship is recorded by E.⁴ This document does not censure these practices⁵ and betrays no knowledge of idols set up and worshipped in public. I am well aware of the fact that the stories of the golden calf⁶ and of the brazen serpent⁷ are commonly assigned to this source. Both these narratives relate the origin of an idolatrous worship of a later day: the one condemns the installation of Jeroboam's golden bulls at Dan and Bethel; the other excuses the superstitious homage paid to Nehushtan until the reign of Hezekiah.⁸ Both have an ax to grind: the exaltation of the Jerusalem temple and the repudiation of the royal sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom. Is not this the burden of Deuteronomy? That an Israelite of the time of Jeroboam II (E) should have gone out of his way in order to discredit his own national shrines (after relating at great length the glorious origin of one of them)⁹ in order to extol the temple of an insignificant rival kingdom, is difficult to believe without the strongest kind of evidence. Anyhow, the story of Aaron's

¹ Gen. 31 51, where **סִבְנֹת** is interpolated.

² Josh. 4 20. According to Robertson Smith (*Religion of the Semites*, p. 211, note 2) these stones were identical with the **סִבְנֵי** of Jud. 3 10, 26. Vernes (*Revue Archéologique*, vii, 288) sees in the Gilgal stones a "solar or zodiacal circle."

³ Gen. 31 19, 24 f.

⁴ Gen. 28 18; 31 18, 45; 33 20 (read **סִבְנֹת** instead of **סִבְנֵי**: see Wellhausen, *Composition des Hexateuchs*, p. 50. Cf. below, note 51); 35 14, 20; Josh. 24 26 b-27.

⁵ Gen. 35 2, 4, with its condemnation of "strange gods" and "earrings," has clearly been worked over by a later hand.

⁶ Ex. 32.

⁷ Num. 21 8.

⁸ 2 Ki. 16 4.

⁹ Gen. 28 10 ff. (cf. Ed. Meyer, *Die Israeliten*, p. 271 f.).

golden calf in its present form must be assigned, on internal grounds, to a redactor; E probably contained the story of a political upheaval rather than of a religious apostasy. The injection of religion into almost any historical incident is typical of late historical writers (cf. below, note 18). Another story, written in like vein to vilify the sanctuary of Dan, has been shown to be a post-exilic concoction.¹⁰

The *early historical books* were equally laconic on the subject of idolatry, and no less innocent of iconoclastic zeal. Domestic images are mentioned as a matter of course;¹¹ the gods of the uncircumcized evoke no reproach.¹² There is no trace of animus against pillars and posts.¹³ Sporadically some kings destroyed a particular idol,¹⁴ but there is no indication of a widespread crusade against image worship before the reign of Josiah. The motives of Asa were no doubt political rather than religious: the desecration of the private chapel of the queen dowager and the destruction of the mysterious מִצְבֵּה ¹⁵ set up in it, were simple means to curb her power. To the bewilderment of the pious redactor of the Book of Kings "the high places were not removed" by Asa.¹⁶ Possibly Isaiah advised Hezekiah to destroy Nehushtan.

In two other instances the mainspring of religious reform was a political motive. The profanation of the Baal temple

¹⁰ Jud. 17 2-4; see Arnold, *Ephod and Ark*, p. 106.

¹¹ Jud. 17 5; 18 14, 17 f., 20; 1 Sam. 19 12, 14. 1 Sam. 15 22 is post-exilic (see Arnold, *Ephod and Ark*, p. 180 f.).

¹² 1 Sam. 5 2-5; 2 Sam. 12 20. In 1 Sam. 31 2 (and possibly in 2 Sam. 5 21, cf. LXX and 1 Chr. 14 12) it seems that מִצְבֵּה of the text was changed into מִצְבָּר by a late scribe (cf. Smith, *Samuel ICC*, p. 253; Moore *Encycl. Bibl.* 2150); another possibility would be that a reader added on the margin $\text{מִצְבָּר} \text{ מִן}$ (LXX: $\tau\omicron\varsigma \epsilon\delta\omega\lambda\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$) which, under the influence of v. 10 was changed to the present Massoretic reading.

¹³ 1 Ki. 7 15-21. In 2 Ki. 12 10 מִצְבָּר is a Jewish surrogate for מִצְבֵּה (thus some Mas of LXX and hexaplaric Syriac; cf. below, note 51).

¹⁴ 1 Ki. 15 13; 2 Ki. 18 4.

¹⁵ 1 Ki. 15 13; 2 Chron. 15 14. Moore (*Encycl. Bibl.* 2180) considers it a surrogate for a more concrete designation of a sacred object.

¹⁶ 1 Ki. 15 14.

in Samaria by Jehu,¹⁷ and its counterpart in Jerusalem,¹⁸ were intended as blows directed against the ruling party. Only incidentally did the religious syncretism of Ahab's family become an issue in the campaign. Hebrew history knows no wholesale destruction of idols before the reign of Josiah, it records no public worship of images other than Jeroboam's bulls and Nehushtan.

The extant prophetic writings prior to 621 B. C. confirm the data of the historical records. In the Northern Kingdom, *Amos* and *Hosea* upbraided Israel for degrading practices in connection with the cult, for superstitious trust in the *opus operatum*, for social villany and political chaos, but they were too keen observers of human behavior to fancy that imageless worship would work like a charm or even improve conditions at all. There is no reason for assuming that they inveighed against the golden hulls of Dan and Bethel.¹⁹

It is most tantalizing to note that idols (אֱלִילִים), in the genuine oracles of *Isaiah*, are mentioned only in two fragmentary texts: "And their land is full of idols . . ." ²⁰ "And the idols . . ." ²¹ All that can be said is that the prophet

¹⁷ 2 Ki. 10 26-27. In v. 26 כַּמְצוֹת may be an error for אֲשֵׁרִית. Jehu was not an iconoclast (2 Ki. 10 29-31).

¹⁸ 2 Ki. 11 18. Stade (*ZAW* v. 286-8) has shown that two accounts have been woven together in ch. 11: the older one knew of a rebellion of the pretorian guard against Athaliah; the destruction of the temple of Baal belongs to the later strand.

¹⁹ The polemic against idolatry was injected later into the writings of these prophets. The following verses must be considered spurious: Am. 2 4; 5 5; 5 26. Hos. 2 10 c ("and the gold they make into the baal"); 3 4 f.; 4 17; 8 4 b; 8 5, c; 9 10 b; 10 5 f., 8; 11 2; 13 1, 2; 14 4, 9.

²⁰ Is. 2 8 a. The rest of the verse was composed *ad hoc* to fill out the lacuna.

²¹ Is. 2 18 a. The rest of the verse is the gloss of a scribe who found a lacuna: כָּלִיל יִחָלֵךְ ("the whole is gone"). Thus Assyrian scribes wrote *ḫipi* (broken) when the fragmentary condition of the tablet to be copied made it unintelligible. Peters (*JBL* xii, 47) noted a similar instance in the LXX of Ez. 42 3: διαγραφμμενοι (to be erased) is a scribal gloss stating that the verse should be considered an interpolation. Curious annotations of similar nature were discovered by Bewer (*JBL* xxx, 61 f.) in *Hosea*.

threatened the adherents of foreign cults with shame and ruin; the ultimate fate of the idols themselves was of no greater concern to him than to the victims of the final catastrophe.²²

Micah, to the best of our knowledge, had nothing to say about idolatry.²³

2. *The Deuteronomic Reform and the Exile.*

The *Deuteronomic Code* (D) was composed by a group of Zadokite priests at Jerusalem. They had appropriated the theology and social gospel of the reforming prophets. They differed, however, from Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and their school, not in doctrines and ideals, but in method. The nation was to be saved not primarily through a change of heart, but through a reform of the cult. The authors of the D Code believed that the worship of Yahweh could not be purified unless it be first centralized in one place, Solomon's temple. All other shrines must be condemned as idolatrous. The new law doomed to destruction:

a) All the Canaanite shrines "upon the hills and under every green tree," together with their altars, pillars of stone, wooden posts and graven images.²⁴

b) Pillars and posts used in the worship of Yahweh.²⁵

c) The worship of foreign gods, particularly astral deities.²⁶

Although these enactments were unheard of before, they did not remain a dead letter, as did most of the exhortations of the prophets. Josiah immediately proceeded to enforce the new law:

a) The temple was cleansed of heathenish objects: the wooden post,²⁷ the chariot of Shamash,²⁸ the roof altars for

²² Cf. Duhm, *Jesaja*, p. 14.

²³ Mic. 17 is a gloss originally written on both sides of the column and wrongly copied into text, just as Jud. 17 2-1 (see Arnold, *Ephod and Ark*, p. 105). The original order of the clauses was: *a c b d*. Mic. 5 12 f. is a late post-exilic text.

²⁴ Deut. 12 2-3.

²⁵ Deut. 16 21 f.

²⁶ Deut. 17 2-4.

²⁷ 2 Ki. 23 6.

²⁸ 2 Ki. 23 11.

astral cults²⁹ were removed and destroyed. The house of the hierodules was demolished.³⁰

b) The shrines just outside of Jerusalem and those of the whole kingdom, from Geba to Beersheba, were defiled.³¹

Jeremiah witnessed the Deuteronomic Reform without much enthusiasm. This emphasis on externals was not to his liking. True to the prophetic tradition, Jeremiah had little to say about idolatry.³²

Zephaniah condemns heathen practices that are not primarily idolatrous.³³

The real polemic against idolatry begins with Ezekiel and the Deuteronomistic redactors. This iconoclastic propaganda was naturally the concern of priests rather than of prophets. In his holy rage, *Ezekiel* coined and used freely the word מַלְאָכִים to express his utter contempt for every sort of image.³⁴

The literary activity of the *Deuteronomistic School* was chiefly editorial. The old codes and the ancient narratives were published anew, with corrections, additions and explanations to bring them up to date. The condemnation of idolatry was naturally missed in the older literature and abundantly supplemented in these new editions.

²⁹ 2 Ki. 23 12.

³⁰ 2 Ki. 23 7.

³¹ 2 Ki. 23 8.

³² Jer. 2 27, 28a, according to Arnold (*Ephod and Ark*, p. 76 a) is part of a genuine oracle addressed to North Israel. The references to the worship of the "Queen of Heaven" in Jer. 7 and 44 contain a genuine kernel, but do not mention any idol. Jer. 13 23, 27 may be authentic; if idolatry is condemned there, it is done in the vaguest of terms. The following verses, frankly censuring image worship, are spurious: Jer. 1 16; 2 5-11 (?); 2 28c; 3 24; 4 1; 5 7 (?); 6 19b; 10 1-16; 11 13, 17; 14 22; 16 16, 19-20; 17 2; 18 15; 26 6, 7; 32 20b, 24 (50 2, 28; 51 17f., 47, 52).

³³ Anyhow, although Cornill (*Einleitung in das A. T.*, 7th edition, p. 207; cf. Duhm, *ZAW* xxi, 93) dates the oracles of this prophet about 680, it is not unlikely that Zeph. 1 4f., ff. should be assigned to the time of the Deuteronomic Reform.

³⁴ The following passages illustrate Ezekiel's attitude toward idolatry: Ez. 5 11; 6; 7 20 (see below, note 52); 8 2, 5f. (8 10 is a gloss from Dent. 4 17f.); 8 12, 17; 11 16, 21; 14 2, 7 (v. 4 is a corrupt doublet of v. 7); 14 11; 16 15ff.; 18 2, 12, 16; 20 7, 9, 16ff.; 22 2, 4; 23 14; 26 11; 30 12; 33 25f.; 36 12, 25; 37 22 (see below, note 52); 43 7, 9; 44 10, 12.

All the *Pentateuchal laws* prohibiting the manufacture and worship of idols are later than 621 B. C.³⁵

Successive accretions have swollen the original D Code to the present *Book of Deuteronomy*.³⁶ Iconic objects were scarcely mentioned at all in the original D Code and in the story of Josiah's reforms, but they grow in prominence in the later polemic, until even the ancient pillars and posts are thought to be real images. The Jews came in contact with genuine idolatry during the exile; idols were uncommon in the shrines of ancient Canaan.

The Deuteronomistic Editor of the *Book of Judges* has written down his philosophy of history: violations of the D Code are the causes of military reverses and national downfall.³⁷ This theory he applies to the stories of the judges, just as the editor of the *Book of Kings* passes judgement upon practically every monarch on the basis of the same standard.³⁸ In the case of the kings of Israel the verdict is always "Guilty!"³⁹ The story of Jeroboam's bulls as we have it⁴⁰ was written by the Editor (R^d); the "sin of Jeroboam" fairly obsessed him.⁴¹ He supplemented the account of Josiah's reforms with new details: the desecration of Bethel,⁴² the profanation of Tophet,⁴³ and the abolition of other forms of heathenism.⁴⁴

³⁵ Ex. 20 4 (= Deut. 5 8); 20 23; 23 24; 34 13, 17 are all Deuteronomistic. Holiness Code: Lev. 19 4; 26 1, 30. P^s: Num. 33 22. For D (oldest prohibition of idolatry) see notes 24—26.

³⁶ The following texts deal with idolatry: D^s: Deut. 4 15 ff.; 29 16 f.; 31 16, 23. D^s: 7 5, 23 f.; 9 13, 14, 21 a (on v. 21 a cf. note 52); 13 13-15. Post-exilic: 27 15; 32 17, 21 (on v. 17 cf. note 56).

³⁷ Jud. 2 11-19; cf. 3 7, 13; 4 1; 6 1; 8 23; 10 6; 13 1.

³⁸ See the convenient table in Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, ii, 858 f.

³⁹ Shallum, who ruled only one month (2 Ki. 15 13), is the only king of Israel whose record is not explicitly censured.

⁴⁰ 1 Ki. 12 23-30.

⁴¹ With the exception of Elah (1 Ki. 16 2, 13), Shallum (cf. note 39), and Hoshea (2 Ki. 17 1 f.), the editor explicitly states that every king followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. R^d's attitude toward idolatry is illustrated by the following passages: 1 Ki. 11 5, 7 f., 23; 13 23; 14 9, 15 f., 23, 24; 15 12; 16 13, 26, 28; 19 16; 2 Ki. 13 2, 6; 16 3; 17 16; 21 2 f., 7 (on v. 7 see note 56); 21 11, 21.

⁴² 2 Ki. 23 15-20.

⁴³ 2 Ki. 23 10. The old source may have related the same incident.

⁴⁴ 2 Ki. 23 13 f., 24.

3. *The post-exilic polemic against idolatry.*

Two circumstances contributed to modify the statements on idolatry after 520 B. C. As time progressed, all the information concerning the worship in the ancient shrines of Canaan had to be obtained from the literary sources as we have them; we therefore know more about the religion of the time of David than the Chronicler did. The Jews came to consider themselves the one chosen people and all other nations were deemed accursed. Far worse than the heathen, the Samaritans, "the scum of men, the hate and scourge of God," were the object of unspeakable detestation: verbal abuse was the only coin by which the Jews could pay back the military attacks of their stronger rivals. This explains why cloudy and confused notions prevailed on the matter of ancient sacred objects, and why anything foreign evoked, in the circle of the pious, utter contempt and vehement rage.

The attitude of the *Chronicler* on the subject of idolatry is revealed by his use of the books of Samuel and Kings. Already in his day, the very names of certain idols and gods were deemed to be defiling to the lips.⁴⁵ The chronicler had few scruples about changing his sources: he freely inserted new stories,⁴⁶ omitted what he disliked,⁴⁷ exaggerated the wickedness

⁴⁵ The asherah of 2 Ki. 217 becomes "the idol" in 2 Chr. 337. The term אֲשֵׁרָה meant in classical Hebrew "wooden post"; in post-exilic times the term was confused with אֲשֵׁרָה and became the name of a goddess. Conversely, אֲשֵׁרָה is confused with אֲשֵׁרָה in the LXX of 1 Sam. 7:3; 12:10 (τὰ ἀλογ; cf. 7:4: τὰ ἀλογ Ἀσραμθ). Although a name *Abd-Ashratum* occurs in the Amarna correspondence, there is no reliable evidence showing that the ancient Hebrews knew a goddess by this name (see Moore, *Judges, ICC*, p. 86f.; and cf. his article *Asherah* in *Encycl. Bibl.*; Meyer, *Die Israeliten*, p. 294f.; P. Torge, *Aschera und Astarte*, Leipzig, 1902). The Chronicler seems to have regarded אֲשֵׁרָה (1 Sam. 31:10) as a proper name and substituted מַלְחָה (1 Chr. 10:10). He avoids the word כַּבֹּד (cf. note 51); he changes כַּבֹּד (2 Ki. 23:14) to חַסִּים (2 Chr. 34:4; cf. 14:4; 34:7). This last word is not found before Ezekiel and in late texts it takes the place of כַּבֹּד (cf. also Is. 17:8; 27:9), which in Chronicles is only used twice (2, 14:2; 31:1) in a Deuteronomistic formula (Deut. 7:5).

⁴⁶ 2 Chr. 24:18; 25:14; 33:15.

⁴⁷ The destruction of Neushtan (2 Ki. 18:4) being rather unflattering to Moses was deemed worthy of oblivion.

of idolatrous kings,⁴⁸ and enhanced the holy zeal of pious rulers.⁴⁹

These tendencies are typical of the time. Words of vituperation were read in the Synagogues instead of the names of Baal, Astarte, Melek,⁵⁰ and other heathen gods.⁵¹ Marginal abuse addressed to heathen images found its way into the text.⁵² Idols were vilified to such an extent that presently Jewish exegesis interpreted every word meaning idol in the Old Testament as an invective:

⁴⁸ The assertion that Ahaz "made also molten images for the Baalim" (2 Chr. 28 2) is purely gratuitous, and malicious at that. Baal and Asherah of 2 Ki. 21 3 become plurals in 2 Chr. 33 3.

⁴⁹ David did not merely remove the Philistine idols (2 Sam. 5 2), but burned them (1 Chr. 14 13). Asa removed the high places (2 Chr. 14 3), in spite of the statement to the contrary in 1 Ki. 15 14 (misinterpreted in 2 Chr. 15 17), and made a covenant with the Lord (2 Chr. 15 8-15). Likewise, Jehoshaphat is made a reformer (2 Chr. 17 3: a gloss? cf. יוֹד) in spite of 1 Ki. 22 44 and 2 Chr. 20 33. Josiah shows his piety when sixteen years old (2 Chr. 34 32), purged the land from idolatry six years before the discovery of the law (v. 3b); his reforms extended to North Israel (v. 6), but the temple (if הַבַּיִת in v. 8 be not a gloss) receives only a passing allusion: had it not been purified by Manasseh (33 15 f.)?

⁵⁰ These names were read *bosheth* (shame): in the case of Astarte and Melek, this reading affected only the Massoretic vocalization (*Ashoretz*, *Molech*). Baal, in such proper names as Eshbaal, Meribbaal, Jerubbaal, is written *bosheth* in the Book of Samuel (except 1 12 11). Similar surrogates of Baal are not uncommon in the Greek and Syriac versions (see Dillman, *Monatsber. der Berl. Akad.*, 1881, pp. 601-620). Perhaps *Tophet* is a "bosheth" vocalization. In very late texts *bosheth* was used instead of baal (Jer. 3 24; 11 13; Hos. 9 10). In Hos. 7 16 לֹא אֱלֹהִים is a surrogate for לַבַּיִת.

⁵¹ In Am. 5 30 *Kēwōn* (Assyrian *Kaiwōnu*) and *Sakkūt* were read *shiqqūš* and are now vocalized thereby; this pronunciation seems to be subsequent to the LXX, for the latter (cf. Acts 7 43) has *Καυφω* (an error for *Καυφω* possibly going back to the Hebrew manuscript used in the translation) and *קפ סקפ* (כֶּכֶּה instead of סַכַּח). Even a word like סַכַּח was wilfully changed (cf. above, notes 4, 13, 17, 45): סַכַּח (Gen. 33 20), סַכַּח (Jud. 9 3), סַכַּח (Gen. 31 49) are surrogates for it (cf. Moore, *Judges*, p. 244). אֱלֹהִים is used for idol (Is. 41 20; 66 3) and for *el* (in Bethel) (Josh. 7 2; 8 12; 1 Sam. 13 3; 14 3; Hos. 4 15; 5 3; 10 3; cf. Am. 5 3). In 1 Ki. 11 5, 7 (cf. 2 Ki. 23 19) אֱלֹהִים is a surrogate for אֱלֹהִים. אֱלֹהִים (Am. 8 14) is probably a surrogate for "the god of Bethel" or the like.

⁵² אֱלֹהִים (Es. 7 20); אֱלֹהִים (Es. 8 10; this verse in the prototype of the LXX contained two additional interpolated invectives: תְּכַלֵּי אֱלֹהִים);

אלילים: this is one of the ten derogatory names by which idols are called: **אלילים** because idols are pierced (**חלולים**); **פסל** because they are carved; **מסכה** because they are melted; **מצבה** because they stand; **עצבים** because they are made limb by limb (**נעשים פרקים פרקים**); **תרפים** because they decay (**מרקיבים**); **גלולים** because they are abominable (**מגעלים**); **שקוצים** because they are detestable; **חמנים** because they stand in the sun (**עומדים בחמה**); **אשרים** because they receive beatitude from others (**מתאשרים מאחרים**).⁵³

Thus etymology was enlisted in the holy war against heathenism!

The insertion of stories about idolatry⁵⁴ and of descriptions of heathen practices⁵⁵ was by no means a monopoly of the Chronicler. These horrors strangely fascinated the pious readers of the sacred books. The temptation to elucidate,⁵⁶

כמעבורתם (Ez. 9 1, cf. M. Lambert, *REJ* xlix, 297). "With their abominations and with all their transgressions" (Ez. 37 28) is a gloss still lacking in the LXX. In Hos. 10 8, either **אמן חטאת** is a gloss (Wellhausen) or "the sin of Israel" is interpolated (in which case *aven* stands for *Beth-aven*, cf. note 50). **אמר-העל** (Deut. 9 21) is interpolated (place **אמר-העל** at the beginning, cf. Ex. 32 20).

⁵³ *Siphra*, ad Lev. 19 4 (Ugolini, *Thesaurus*, xiv, 1338).

⁵⁴ Jud. 17 2-4 (cf. note 10); 18 17 b, 20 f. (Arnold, *Ephod and Ark*, p. 106); 1 Sam. 4 8 (Arnold, *op. cit.* p. 35); Jer. 7 20 (based on 2 Ki. 21 7); Hos. 9 10 b (where the glossator misunderstood Num. 26 5 by making of Baal-Peor the name of a place); 13 1 (written long after 722); Neh. 9 18 (quotes Ex. 32).

⁵⁵ Hos. 2 10 c (cf. note 19); Is. 44 2-20; Jer. 10 1-18.

⁵⁶ The following are explanatory marginal notes: "Wood and stone" (Deut. 28 24); **לא מלה** (Deut. 32 17); "The two calves" (2 Ki. 17 16); "The golden calves at Bethel and Dan" (10 28); **פסל** 21 7; 2 Chr. 33 7); "They are no gods" (Jer. 2 11); "The altars are for *bosheth*" (11 13; cf. 2 23 b and LXX. See note 50); "Every form of creeping thing and beasts" (Ez. 8 10 quoting Deut. 4 17 f.); Ez. 14 4-6 (cf. note 34). In Am. 5 28 (cf. note 51) the proof that the words **נרב מלויכם** were originally a marginal gloss is furnished by the LXX, whose Hebrew prototype had the words in a different place. 2 Ki. 23 13 is based on 1 Ki. 11 7. Is. 10 10-12 is an insipid elucidation of v. 9. Nah. 1 14 b misunderstands "he is utterly cut off" (21), although it was jotted down on the margin to explain it; it therefore refers to Judah (with Procksch, Sellin, Nowack) and not to Nineveh (Arnold, *ZAW* xxi, 255). "The blood of their sons and their daughters which they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan" (Ps. 106 28) is a well known gloss to "innocent blood."

to supplement,⁵⁷ to harmonize⁵⁸ biblical texts proved often irresistible.

Post-exilic Judaism used, in its polemic against idolatry, the simple and commonplace arguments familiar to all iconoclasts: if idols are not divine beings and do not even have life, then the claims of their worshipers are but vain delusions.

Idols are not gods:⁵⁹ they have not made the heavens,⁶⁰ they cannot grant rain.⁶¹ Although they are worshiped⁶² they are deaf to prayer,⁶³ they cannot prophesy⁶⁴; in a word they can avail nothing⁶⁵ nor benefit their followers in any way.⁶⁶

Men have life, but idols are nothing but dead matter: gold and silver,⁶⁷ wood and stone.⁶⁸ They are the work of human hands,⁶⁹ being fashioned by carpenters⁷⁰ and foundera.⁷¹ There is no life in them: they "neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell;"⁷² they neither breathe⁷³ nor speak.⁷⁴ Being unable to

⁵⁷ The name of female deities was sometimes added to the mention of gods for the sake of completeness: *Asherotā* (Jud. 3 7); "400 prophets of Ashera" (1 Ki. 18 19; cf. LXX in v. 29); *Ashtarotā* (Jud. 2 19; 10 6; 1 Sam. 7 8; 19 10).

⁵⁸ לֹא־וַיִּבְרָא and וַיִּבְרָא were added harmonistically throughout Jud. 17-18 after the story of 17 3-4 had come in from the margin.

⁵⁹ Deut. 32 17, 21; 2 Ki. 19 18; Jer. 2 11; 5 7; 16 20; Hos. 8 a.

⁶⁰ Jer. 10 11 (an Aramaic gloss).

⁶¹ Jer. 14 22.

⁶² Is. 2 20 (a gloss on "and the idols" of v. 10); 44 18, 17, 19; 45 20b; 46 5b. Idols are kissed (Hos. 13 2; cf. 1 Ki. 19 19).

⁶³ Is. 46 7 c.

⁶⁴ Is. 48 5b.

⁶⁵ Jud. 10 15 f.; 1 Sam. 12 21; Is. 45 20b; Jer. 2 28; 11 12.

⁶⁶ 1 Sam. 12 21; Is. 44 10; Jer. 2 8; 16 19; Hab. 2 18.

⁶⁷ Ex. 20 23; Deut. 29 16; Is. 2 20; 30 22; 31 7; 46 8; Jer. 10 4, 8; Hos. 8 4 b; Hab. 2 19; Ps. 135 15. Gold: Ex. 32 34; Hos. 2 10 c. Silver: Jud. 17 8; Hos. 13 a.

⁶⁸ Deut. 4 20; 28 26, 64; 29 16; 2 Ki. 19 18; Jer. 2 27 a; Hab. 2 19. Wood: Is. 44 15, 18 f., 19; 45 20b; Jer. 10 2, a.

⁶⁹ Deut. 4 20; 31 29; Is. 2 2 b, 20; 17 8; 31 7; 2 Ki. 19 18; Jer. 1 10; 2 28 a; 25 a, 7; 32 30 b; 44 8; 51 18; Hos. 14 4; Am. 5 26; Hab. 2 19; Ps. 135 15.

⁷⁰ מְבַרֵךְ (carpenter or smith): Deut. 27 18; Is. 40 19; 41 7; 44 11-13; 45 16; Hos. 8 4; 13 2; Jer. 10 2, 8. Cf. the *faber* of Horace, *Sat.* I, 8, 2.

⁷¹ מְבַרֵךְ: Jud. 17 4; Is. 40 19; 41 7; 46 8; Jer. 10 2, 14; 51 17.

⁷² Deut. 4 22.

⁷³ Jer. 10 14—51 17; Hab. 2 19; Ps. 135 17.

⁷⁴ Jer. 10 6; Hab. 2 19 f.; Ps. 135 15.

walk, they are carried in procession⁷⁵ and laboriously moved from place to place.⁷⁶ They are but vanity⁷⁷ and falsehood,⁷⁸ they become a sin⁷⁹ and profanation⁸⁰ to the country.

But the final punishment of idolatry is imminent.⁸¹ The Lord, whose indignation the idols have aroused,⁸² will at last judge⁸³ and defeat them;⁸⁴ they must then bow down before his majesty⁸⁵. The idols will go into exile,⁸⁶ they will be broken,⁸⁷ they will be cast away,⁸⁸ they will utterly perish.⁸⁹ Total disgrace will overtake the idols,⁹⁰ those who trust in them,⁹¹ serve them,⁹² and make them.⁹³

The return to the Lord⁹⁴ and the purification of the land from the abominations of idolatry⁹⁵ are among the glorious promises of a happier future.

⁷⁵ Is. 45 20 b; 46 1; Am. 5 26.

⁷⁶ Is. 46 7 a; Jer. 10 5.

⁷⁷ Dent. 32 21; 1 Sam. 12 21; 1 Ki. 16, 18, 26; 2 Ki. 17 15; Jer. 2 5; 8 19; 10 8, 14 f.; 14 22; 16 19; 51 18.

⁷⁸ Jer. 10 14; 16 19; 51 17; Am. 2 4; cf. Hab. 2 18.

⁷⁹ Is. 31 7.

⁸⁰ Jer. 16 18.

⁸¹ 2 Ki. 22 17; Jer. 1 16; 11 17.

⁸² Dent. 4 25; 9 19; 31 29; 32 16, 21; 1 Ki. 14 15; 16 12, 20; 2 Ki. 22 17; Jer. 8 19; 11 17; 26 8 f.; 32 20.

⁸³ Jer. 51 47, 52.

⁸⁴ Is. 19, 1, 2.

⁸⁵ Ps. 97 7 c (gloss to v. 9 b).

⁸⁶ Is. 46 2; Hos. 10 6.

⁸⁷ Hos. 6 6.

⁸⁸ Is. 2 20 (see note 62); cf. 17 8; 30 22.

⁸⁹ Jer. 51 18; cf. 10 11.

⁹⁰ Jer. 50 2.

⁹¹ Is. 42 17.

⁹² Ps. 97 7 ab.

⁹³ Is. 44 9, 11; 45 16; Jer. 10 14—51 17; Ps. 135 18.

⁹⁴ Cf. Jer. 4 1.

⁹⁵ Is. 27 9; Hos. 14 4, 9; Mic. 1 7; 5 12 f.