

## The Centralization of Israel's Worship.

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WHEN Israel invaded Canaan and began to settle upon the land, she found everywhere throughout it an idolatrous worship vigorously maintained by the older inhabitants upon the so-called high places (Dt 12<sup>2</sup>). These were very frequently upon hill-tops (Hos 4<sup>13</sup>), but the word came to be applied in a more general way to any seat of idolatrous worship; and probably every city or village had a high place of its own (2 K 17<sup>9</sup>), in which the Baal of the district was worshipped. In her occupation of the land, nothing was more natural than that Israel should take over some of those high places and make them centres of the worship of her own national God. Von Gall (*Altisr. Kultstätten*, 1898) has enumerated nearly a hundred such centres, many of which, such as Gilgal and Beersheba (Am 5<sup>5</sup>), were the objects of pilgrimage. The sites glorified in the stories of the patriarchs, and associated with those ancient names—Shechem with Abraham (Gn 12<sup>7</sup>), Beersheba with Isaac (26<sup>33</sup>), Bethel with Jacob (28<sup>19</sup>)—must have been famous seats of worship long before the invasion of Canaan by Israel; and they continued to enjoy their prestige, and to be the pride and joy of the people, at least down to the time of Amos and Hosea, in the 8th century B.C.

Of the legitimacy of these places of worship in the mind of early Israel there can be no doubt. Her leading men deliberately identify themselves with the worship that was there carried on, and even take a foremost part in it. Samuel presides over a sacrifice held in a high place (1 S 9<sup>12</sup>); Solomon on a great occasion sacrifices at Gibeon (1 K 3<sup>4</sup>); Elijah defends the cause of Israel's God at the altar on Carmel (1 K 18<sup>21ff.</sup>), and he complains bitterly that the altars at which Jahweh was worshipped had been thrown down throughout the land (1 K 19<sup>10, 14</sup>).

Connected, however, with the worship upon the high places were very grave dangers. The worship of Jahweh there celebrated tended to degenerate into a worship scarcely distinguishable from that of Baal. The two had, indeed, from the beginning many elements in common. Jahweh could Himself be called Baal, as many Hebrew proper names show; the association of deity with springs, trees,

stones, etc., was common to both, many of Israel's shrines being admittedly connected with these things—Hebron with a tree (Gn 13<sup>18</sup>), Beersheba with a well (26<sup>32</sup>), Bethel with a stone (28<sup>18</sup>). The sensuous rites with which the older inhabitants had celebrated the fertility of the land, could hardly help infecting the worship of Jahweh. And such we know to have been the case. Immorality was freely practised at the shrines (Am 2<sup>7</sup>, Hos 4<sup>13</sup>), and indulgence of other kinds was also rampant (Am 2<sup>8</sup>); and these excesses not only were not restrained, but they appear to have been abetted by the priests, who sometimes even behaved with unscrupulous violence (Hos 6<sup>9</sup>). The worship was frankly idolatrous (1 K 12<sup>28</sup>, Hos 8<sup>6, 10<sup>5</sup></sup>), in most respects practically a Baal-worship—a shameless caricature of true Jahweh-worship; and we cannot wonder that the earlier prophets foretell the destruction of the sanctuaries at which it was practised (Am 7<sup>9</sup>, Hos 10<sup>8</sup>).

Less grave than these moral offences, but not unimportant, was the inadequate conception of the unity of Jahweh which the multiplicity of shrines tended to encourage. He was the one God who had given Israel the land and victory; but the various shrines, with their, no doubt, partly varying types of worship, were in danger of obscuring this unity, so that the Jahweh of Gibeon, who appeared to Solomon in a dream (1 K 3<sup>5</sup>), might be practically conceived as a different person from the Jahweh of Hebron, to whom Absalom had vowed a vow (2 S 15<sup>7</sup>). The purity of Jahweh-worship as practised at the shrines was in grave danger, then, from these two sources: His unity was obscured, and—what was of more practical importance—His moral demands were ignored.

A reformation was needed; and yet, in a sense, reformation was impossible. Affection for the shrines, hoary as they were with ancient traditions, and alive with happy, joyous memories, was too deeply planted in the hearts of the people to be lightly uprooted by the reforming party, especially as the land was covered from end to end with these seats of worship, and their influence, partly for good, largely for evil, spread like a network throughout the whole life of the people; and, as under

these circumstances improvement seemed impossible, the only alternative was the abolition of these places, and the centralization of the worship in one spot, where it could be controlled by those to whom its purity was dear. The way for this centralization had already been gradually prepared. A certain pre-eminence would, no doubt, from the first attach to the sanctuary in which the ark was present—e.g. Shiloh (1 S 3). But, after the destruction of Shiloh (cf. Jer 7<sup>12</sup>), the claims of Jerusalem, as soon as the monarchy had securely established itself, would soon begin to overshadow those of other shrines—at least of the shrines of Judah; for, of course, northern Israel had famous shrines of her own, notably at Bethel and Dan (1 K 12<sup>20</sup>). For one thing, Jerusalem was the capital, and the political centralization effected there would create an atmosphere in which the idea of religious centralization would begin to flourish. Besides, the temple was attached to the palace, and would gather to itself the glory associated with royalty. It was a sort of king's chapel, built on a scale so magnificent that it must have thrown all the other high places of Judah into the shade, and its sacrifices and ceremonies would be conducted on an equally splendid scale.

When the northern kingdom fell, in 721 B.C., and Judah became the real centre of Hebrew life, the importance of Jerusalem, in the religious as well as in the political aspect, must have been greatly enhanced; and the prestige already attaching to it must have been enormously increased when, twenty years later (701 B.C.), the city and temple were spared in Sennacherib's invasion of Judah, which destroyed forty-six other cities, and dealt, no doubt, a serious blow to the prestige of their high places. The belief in the inviolability of Jerusalem, encouraged by this deliverance, and doubtless also by the preaching of Isaiah, must have continued to be held with great tenacity, for a century later Jeremiah (26<sup>11</sup>) finds it necessary to enter a very strenuous protest against it—a protest which nearly cost him his life. Thus everything conspired to point to Jerusalem as the true centre of Jahweh-worship, should the time ever come for its centralization. The need for that centralization we have already seen—a need created by the immorality of the sanctuaries generally, and by the imperilled unity of Jahweh; for Jahweh is one (Dt 6<sup>4</sup>), and from one God it was easy to argue to one sanctuary. In the 7th century a

reform programme was drawn up, and embodied in Deuteronomy in 621 B.C. The reformers at one stroke declared the worship of the shrines throughout the land as illegal, and centralized the worship at Jerusalem, which is described as 'the place which Jahweh your God shall choose' (Dt 12<sup>5</sup>). From that day on—theoretically at least—Jerusalem is the place where alone Jews ought to worship (Jn 4<sup>20</sup>), and in later times we hear no more of the high places. The exile of half a century in Babylon (586–537) effectually severed the people from all such associations, and in later times it was the dearest ambition of every loyal Jew of the Dispersion to visit Jerusalem and participate in the worship of the temple (Ps 84).

Practically, however, the victory was not so complete as it seemed to be. The people can hardly have witnessed the demolition of their beloved shrines without the deepest resentment, and the death of the reforming king Josiah on the battlefield (608 B.C.) gave a great impetus to the reactionaries, so that Jeremiah's complaint—whatever be its date—that the gods of Judah are as numerous as her cities (28 11<sup>13</sup>), is probably nearly as applicable to the time after as before the Deuteronomic law. Many of the survivals of idolatrous and superstitious worship attested for post-exilic times (Is 57<sup>3ff.</sup> 65<sup>3f.</sup> 66<sup>17</sup>) were probably associated with the sites of ancient high places. But in spite of such sporadic usages, the exclusive legitimacy of the worship at Jerusalem was, from the time of the return, acknowledged—at least by all loyal Jews—in practice as it had already been in theory; and the spiritual needs of those who resided at a distance from Jerusalem were met by synagogues.

For the Samaritans, however, as is well known, who formed a schismatic community in the 5th or 4th century B.C., the place of worship was Gerizim (cf. Jn 4<sup>20</sup>), and this it has continued to be to this day. More remarkable, however, is it to find, in spite of the Deuteronomic law, a temple of Jahweh in Egypt erected by Egyptian Jews. According to the Elephantine papyri published by Sachau in 1907, a temple of Jahu (Jahweh) at Jeb (Elephantine) was destroyed in 411 B.C. by order of the Persian governor Waidrang, at the instigation of the priests of the Egyptian god Khnub, and the Jews appeal for its restoration to the Persian governor of Judah and the high priest. In the course of the letter they acknowledge that the

temple is at least as old as Cambyses' invasion of Egypt (525 B.C.). Even that, however, would be a century after the publication of the Deuteronomic law, enforcing centralization. Steuernagel (*S.K.*, 1909, 7 ff.) has suggested that the Jews who built this temple had gone to Egypt as auxiliaries to aid Psammetichus I. against the Ethiopians about 650 B.C. In that case they would have been unacquainted with the Deuteronomic law, and their creation of a temple would be altogether

intelligible. It is also possible, if the colony should be proved to have been founded later—and it may even be earlier—that the views of the Egyptian Jews in this respect, as in some others, were more liberal than those of the motherland. We also know that a temple, modelled on that at Jerusalem, was erected by Onias IV. at Leontopolis in Egypt, about 160 B.C., where worship was regularly maintained till after the fall of the Jerusalem temple (Josephus, *Ant.* XIII. iii. 1).

## Literature.

### SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

THE conflict between Religion and Science is not yet at an end; and some think that it is never like to be. But it has undoubtedly entered upon a most interesting stage of its history. There were once dogmatists in Religion who denied the right of Science to exist. St. Paul spoke of 'science falsely so called.' They said all science was falsely so called. There are now dogmatists in Science, like Haeckel and Mr. McCabe, who deny the right of Religion. But if Religion did not accomplish the suppression of Science in its infancy, Science will not succeed in annihilating Religion in its manhood. The new phase of the conflict is the recognition of the right of Science to exist and of Religion to exist, and the inevitable inquiry thereupon whether they can occupy adjacent territory in peace or must continue to go to war for some territory lying between them to be for ever claimed by both. One thing is certain. It will be better that the conflict should continue than that Religion should be content to claim its men of religion, leaving Science to retain its men of science.

The whole subject has been considered by Professor Émile Boutroux of the University of Paris, and he has written a book upon it, which has been translated by Mr. Jonathan Nield, under the title of *Science and Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* (Duckworth; 8s. net). What conclusion does he come to? The first conclusion he comes to is that men of religion are no longer to be satisfied without science, and that men of science are no longer to be satisfied without religion. And that is not only the first thing, but

the last. For it really does not matter, then, though Science and Religion should continue to quarrel a little about their boundary-stones. If the time should come when Germany should say to France (in the language of Mr. G. K. Chesterton), 'I need also your swiftness and experimentalism'; and France should say to Germany, 'And I need something of your slowness and reverence,' it does not follow that Alsace-Lothringen will become Alsace and Lorraine, but it will be a great step towards perfection, the perfection of individual Germany, and the perfection of individual France. The absurdity called Germany shall correct the insanity called France, and both shall be vastly the better of it.

But what will Science stand for? It will stand for the study of phenomena and for the conclusions which may be drawn from that study. And what will Religion stand for? It will stand for the interpretation of science and for the unexpected that occurs in the study of phenomena. For the unexpected does occur. Science supposes—science is built upon the supposition—that all phenomena are only the repetition of a single phenomenon. And it is so, except when the unexpected happens. 'We labour for what is uncertain,' said St. Augustine; and the saying made a great impression on Pascal. It is another way of saying, 'We live by faith.'

But this faith when it is exercised finds its object more certain than are the phenomena of Science. And then it proceeds to love. Faith, representation of an ideal, enthusiasm or love—these three make up the 'insanity' called Religion, without which the 'absurdity' called Science cannot be made perfect.