

**WHEELER  
JOSEPH  
MAZZINI**

BIBLE STUDIES: ESSAYS  
ON PHALLIC WORSHIP  
AND OTHER CURIOUS  
RITES AND CUSTOMS

**Joseph Wheeler**  
**Bible Studies: Essays on  
Phallic Worship and Other  
Curious Rites and Customs**

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# **J. M. Wheeler**

## **Bible Studies: Essays on Phallic Worship and Other Curious Rites and Customs**

### **PREFACE**

My old friend Mr. Wheeler asks me to launch this little craft, and I do so with great pleasure. She is not a thunderous ironclad, nor a gigantic ocean liner; but she is stoutly built, well fitted, and calculated to weather all the storms of criticism. My only fear is that she will not encounter them.

During the sixteen years of my friend's collaboration with me in many enterprises for the spread of Freethought and the destruction of Superstition, he has written a vast variety of articles, all possessing distinctive merit, and some extremely valuable. From these he and I have made the following selection. The articles included deal with the Bible from a special standpoint; the standpoint of an Evolutionist, who reads the Jewish Scriptures in the light of anthropology, and finds infinite illustrations in them of the savage origin of religion.

Literary and scientific criticism of the Old Testament have

their numerous votaries. Mr. Wheeler's mind is given to a different study of the older half of the Bible. He is bent on showing what it really contains; what religious ideas, rites, and customs prevailed among the ancient Jews and find expression in their Scriptures. This is a fruitful method, especially in *our* country, if it be true, as Dr. Tylor observes, that "the English mind, not readily swayed by rhetoric, moves freely under the pressure of facts."

Careful readers of this little book will find it full of precious information. Mr. Wheeler has a peculiarly wide acquaintance with the literature of these subjects. He has gathered from far and wide, like the summer bee, and what he yields is not an undigested mass of facts, but the pure honey of truth.

Many readers will be astonished at what Mr. Wheeler tells them. We have read the Bible, they will say, and never saw these things. That is because they read it without knowledge, or without attention. Reading is not done with the eyes only, but also with the brain; and the same sentences will make various impressions, according as the brain is rich or poor in facts and principles. Even the great, strong mind of Darwin had to be plentifully stored with biological knowledge before he could see the meaning of certain simple facts, and discover the wonderful law of Natural Selection.

Those who have studied the works of Spencer, Tylor, Lubbock, Frazer, and such authors, will *not* be astonished at the contents of this volume. But they will probably find some

points they had overlooked; some familiar points presented with new force; and some fresh views, whose novelty is not their only virtue: for Mr. Wheeler is not a slavish follower of even the greatest teachers, he thinks for himself, and shows others what he has seen with his own eyes.

I hope this little volume will find many readers. Its doing so will please the author, for every writer wishes to be read; why else, indeed, should he write? Only less will be the pleasure of his friend who pens this Preface. I am sure the book will be instructive to most of those into whose hands it falls; to the rest, the few who really study and reflect, it will be stimulating and suggestive. Greater praise the author would not desire; so much praise cannot often be given with sincerity.

*G. W. Foote.*

# PHALLIC WORSHIP AMONG THE JEWS

"The hatred of indecency, which appears to us so natural as to be thought innate, and which is so valuable an aid to chastity, is a modern virtue, appertaining exclusively, as Sir G. Staunton remarks, to civilised life. This is shown by the ancient religious rites of various nations, by the drawings on the walls of Pompeii, and by the practices of many savages."—C. Darwin, "Descent of Man" pt. 1, chap. iv., vol. i., p. 182; 1888.

The study of religions is a department of anthropology, and nowhere is it more important to remember the maxim of the pagan Terence, *Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto*. It is impossible to dive deep into any ancient faiths without coming across a deal of mud. Man has often been defined as a religious animal. He might as justly be termed a dirty and foolish animal. His religions have been growths of earth, not gifts from heaven, and they usually bear strong marks of their clayey origin.<sup>1</sup>

I am not one of those who find in phallicism the key to all the mysteries of mythology. All the striking phenomena of nature—the alternations of light and darkness, sun and moon, the terrors

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<sup>1</sup> The Contemporary Review for June 1888, says (p. 804) "when Lord Dalhousie passed an Act intended to repress obscenity (in India), a special clause in it exempted all temples and religious emblems from its operation."

of the thunderstorm, and of pain, disease and death, together with his own dreams and imaginations—contributed to evoke the wonder and superstition of early man. But investigation of early religion shows it often nucleated around the phenomena of generation. The first and final problem of religion concerns the production of things. Man's own body was always nearer to him than sun, moon, and stars; and early man, thinking not in words but in things, had to express the very idea of creation or production in terms of his own body. It was so in Egypt, where the symbol, from being the sign of production, became also the sign of life, and of regeneration and resurrection. It was so in Babylonia and Assyria, as in ancient Greece and Troy, and is so till this day in India.

Montaigne says:

"Fifty severall deities were in times past allotted to this office. And there hath beene a nation found which to allay and coole the lustful concupiscence of such as came for devotion, kept wenches of purpose in their temples to be used; for it was a point of religion to deale with them before one went to prayers. *Nimirum propter continentiam incontinentia necessaria est, incendium ignibus extinguitur*: 'Belike we must be incontinent that we may be continent, burning is quenched by fire.' In most places of the world that part of our body was deified. In that same province some flead it to offer, and consecrated a peece thereof; others offered and consecrated their seed."

It is in India that this early worship maybe best studied at

the present day. The worshippers of Siva identify their great god, Maha Deva, with the linga, and wear on their left arm a bracelet containing the linga and yoni. The rival sect of followers of Vishnu have also a phallic significance in their symbolism. The linga yoni (fig. 1) is indeed one of the commonest of religious symbols in India. Its use extends from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. Major-General Forlong says the ordinary Maha Deva of Northern India is the simple arrangement shown in fig. 2, in which we see "what was I suspect the first Delphic tripod supporting a vase of water over the Linga in Yona. Such may be counted by scores in a day's march over Northern India, and especially at ghats or river ferries, or crossings of any streams or roads; for are they not Hermæ?" The Linga Purana tells us that the linga was a pillar of fire in which Siva was present. This reminds one of Jahveh appearing as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

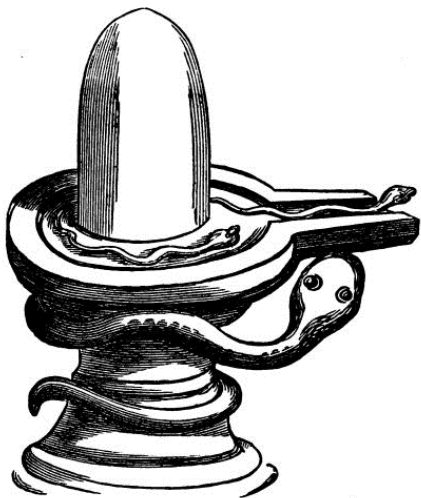


Fig. 1.—The Hindu Maha Deva, or Linga-Yoni.

So astounded have been many writers at the phenomena presented by phallic worship that they have sought to explain it, not only by the story of the fall and the belief in original sin, but by the direct agency of devils.<sup>2</sup> Yet it may be wrong to associate the origin of phallic worship with obscenity. Early man was rather unmoral than immoral. Obligated to think in things, it was to him no perversion to mentally associate with

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<sup>2</sup> See Gougenot des Mousseaux's curious work *Dieu et les Dieux*, Paris, 1854. When the Luxor monument was erected in Rome, Pope Sixtus V. deliberately exorcised the devils out of possession of it.

his own person the awe of the mysterious power of production. The sense of pleasure and the desire for progeny of course contributed. The worship was indeed both natural and inevitable in the evolution of man from savagery. When, however, phallic worship was established, it naturally led to practices such as those which Herodotus, Diodorus, and Lucian tell us took place in the Egyptian, Babylonian, and Syrian religions.



**Fig. 2.—Rural Hindu Lingam.**

Hume's observation that polytheism invariably preceded monotheism has been confirmed by all subsequent investigation.

The belief in one god or supreme spirit springs out of the belief in many gods or spirits. That this was so with the Jews there is sufficient evidence in the Bible, despite the fact that the documents so called have been frequently "redacted," that is corrected, and the evidence in large part erased. An instance of this falsification may be found in Judges xviii. 30 (see Revised Version), where "Manasseh" has been piously substituted for Moses, in order to conceal the fact that the direct descendants of Moses were image worshippers down till the time of the captivity. The Rabbis gave what Milton calls "this insulse rule out of their Talmud; 'That all words, which in the Law are written obscenely, must be changed to more civil words.' Fools who would teach men to read more decently than God thought good to write."<sup>3</sup> Instances of euphemisms may be traced in the case of the "feet" (Judges iii. 24, Song v. 3, Isaiah vii\* 20); "thigh" (Num. v. 24); "heel" (Gen, iii. 15); "heels" (Jer. xiii. 22); and "hand" (Isaiah lvii. 7). This last verse is translated by Dr. Cheyne, "and behind the door and the post hast thou placed thy memorial, for apart from me thou hast uncovered and gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and obtained a contract from them (?); thou hast loved their bed; thou hast beheld the phallus." In his note Dr. Cheyne gives the view of the Targum and Jerome "that 'memorial' = idol (or rather idolatrous symbol—the phallus)."

The priests, whose policy it was to keep the nation isolated, did their best to destroy the evidence that the Jews shared

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<sup>3</sup> "Apology for Smectymnus," Works, p.84.

in the idolatrous beliefs and practices of the nations around them. In particular the cult of Baal and Asherah, which we shall see was a form of phallic worship, became obnoxious, and the evidence of its existence was sought to be obliterated. The worship, moreover, became an esoteric one, known only to the priestly caste, as it still is among Roman Catholic initiates, and the priestly caste were naturally desirous that the ordinary worshipper should not become "as one of us."

It is unquestionable that in the earliest times the Hebrews worshipped Baal. In proof there is the direct assertion of Jahveh himself (Hosea ii. 16) that "thou shalt call me *Ishi* [my husband] and shalt call me no more *Baali*." The evidence of names, too, is decisive. Gideon's other name, Jerubbaal (Jud. vi. 32, and 1 Sam. xii. 11), was evidently the true one, for in 2 Sam. xi. 21, the name Jerubbesheth is substituted. Eshbaal (1 Chron. viii. 33) is called Ishbosheth (2 Sam. ii. 8, 10). Meribbaal (1 Chron. viii. 34) is Mephibosheth (2 Sam. iv. 4).<sup>4</sup> Now *bosheth* means v "shame," or "shameful thing," and as Dr. Donaldson points out, in especial, "sexual shame," as in Gen. ii. 25. In the Septuagint version of 1 Kings xviii. 25, the prophets of Baal are called "the prophets of that shame." Hosea ix. 10 says "they went to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to Bosheth and became abominable like that they loved." Micah i. 11 "having thy Bosheth naked." Jeremiah xi. 5, "For according to the number of

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<sup>4</sup> So Baaljadah [1 Chron. xiv. 7] is Eliada [2 Sam. v. 161.] In 1 Chron. xii. 6, we have the curious combination, Baaljah, i.e. Baal is Jah, as the name of one of David's heroes.

thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to Bosheth, altars to burn incense unto Baal."

The place where the ark stood, known afterwards as Kirjath-jearim, was formerly named Baalah, or place of Baal (I Chron. xiii. 6). The change of name took place after David's time, since the writer of 2 Sam. vi. 2 says merely that David went with the ark from "Baale of Judah."<sup>5</sup> Colenso notices that when the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal are said to have been destroyed by Elijah, nothing is said of the four hundred prophets of the Asherah. "Also these same '400 prophets,' apparently, are called together by Ahab as prophets of JHVH, and they reply in the name of JHVH, 1 Kings xxii. 5-6."

That phallicism was an important element in Baal and Asherah worship is well known to scholars, and will be made clear to discerning readers. The frequent allusion to "groves" in the Authorised Version must have puzzled many a simple student. The natural but erroneous suggestion of "tree worship" does not fit in very well with the important statement (2 Kings xxiii. 6) that Josiah "brought out the grove from the house of the Lord."<sup>6</sup> A reference to the Revised Version will show that

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<sup>5</sup> The "Baal" was afterwards taken out of all such names of places, and instead of Baal Peor, Baal Meon, Baal Tamar, Baal Shalisha, etc., we find Beth Peor, Beth Meon, Beth Tamar, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Verse vii. says, "he brake down the houses of the sodomites that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove." A reference to the Revised Version shows that it was "in the house of the Lord, where the women wove

this misleading word is intended to conceal the real nature of the worship of Asherah. The door of life, the conventional form of the Asherah with its thirteen flowers or measurements of time, is given in fig. 3.

This worship certainly lasted from the earliest historic times until the seventeenth year of Josiah, B.C. 624. We read how in the days of the Judges they "served Baalim and the groves" (R. V., "the Asheroth"; Judges iii, 7; see ii. 12, "Baal and Ash-taroth.) We find that Solomon himself "went after Ashtoreth (1 Kings xi. 5) and that he builded the mount of corruption (margin, i.e., the mount of Olives) for that "abomination of the Zidonians" (2 Kings xxiii. 13). All the distinctive features of Solomon's Temple were Phoenician in character. What the Phoenician temples were like Lucian tells us in his treatise on the goddess of Syria. The great pillars Jachin, "the establisher," and Boaz, "strength"; the ornamentation of palm trees, pomegranates, and lotus work; are all Phoenician and all phallic. The bells and pomegranates on the priests' garment were emblematic of the paps and full womb. The palm-tree, which appears both in Solomon's temple and in Ezekiel's vision, was symbolical, as may be seen in the Assyrian monument (fig. 4), and which finds a place in Eastern Christian symbolism, with the mystic alpha and omega (fig. 5).

The worship of Astoreth, the Assyrian Ishtar, and Greek Astarte, was widespread. The Phoenicians took it with them to Cyprus and Carthage. In the days of Abraham there was a

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hangings [or tents] for the Asherah." See also Ezek. xvi. 16.

town called after her (Gen. xiv. 5), and to this day her name is preserved in Esther.



**Fig. 3.—Asherah.**

It is she who is called the Queen of Heaven, to whom the women made moon-shaped cakes and poured libations (Jer. vii. 18, xlv. 17.) Baal represented the generative, Astoreth the productive power. The pillars and asherah, so often alluded to in the Bible, were the palm-tree, with male and female animals frolicking around the tree of life, the female near the fleur de

lis and the male near the yoni. Tall and straight trees, especially the palm, were revered as symbols. Palm branches carried in procession were signs of fruitfulness and joy.

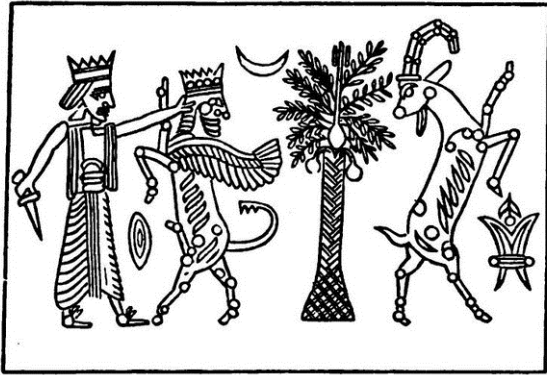


Fig. 4.—From Layard, *Culte de Venus*, plate 1, fig. 20, depicts the mystic palm-tree, with male and female animals frolicking around the tree of life, the female near the *fleur de lis* and the male near the *yoni*. Tall and straight trees, especially the palm, were revered as symbols. Palm branches carried in procession were signs of fruitfulness and joy.

Bishop Colenso in his notes to Dr. Oort's work remarks, "It seems plain that the Ashera (from *ashar*, be straight, erect) was in reality a phallus, like the *Linga* or *Lingam* of the Hindoos, the sign of the male organ of generation."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Asher was the tutelary god of Assyria. His emblem was the winged circle.

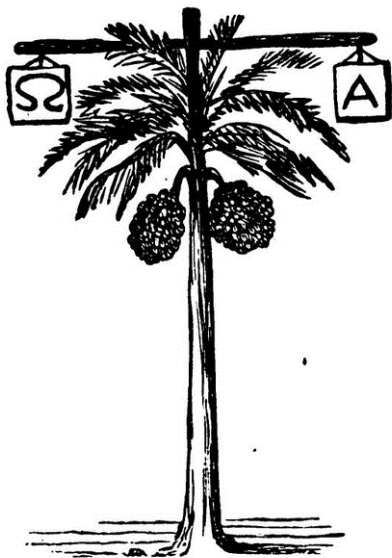


Fig. 5.—The Eastern Christian palm, on which is placed the cross and banners with the Alpha and Omega.

There can be little doubt on the matter in the mind of anyone acquainted with ancient faiths and the inevitable phases of human evolution, We read (1 Kings xv. 13, Revised Version), that Maachah, the queen mother of Asa, "made an abominable image for an Asherah." This the Vulgate translates "Priape" and Movers *pudendum*. Jeremiah, who alludes to the same thing (x. 5), tells that the people said, "to a stock, Thou art my father, and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth" (ii. 27), that they "defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and with stocks" (iii.

9), playing the harlot "under every green tree" (ii. 20, iii. 6, 13; see also Hosea iv. 13). Isaiah xvii. 8, alludes to the Asherim as existing in his own days, and alludes to these religions in plain terms (lvii. 5—8). Micah also prophesies against the "pillars" and "Asherim" (v. 13, 14). Ezekiel xvi. 17, says "Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels, of my gold and of silver, which I have given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them." The margin more properly reads images "Heb. of a male" [tsalmi zachar], a male here being an euphemism. As Gesenius says of the metaphor in Numbers xxiv. 7 these things are "ex nostra sensu obscoena, sed Orientalibus familiaria."

These images are alluded to and prohibited in Deut. iv. 16. It is thus evident that some form of phallic worship lasted among the Jews—from the earliest times until their captivity in Babylon.

It is a most significant fact that the Jews used one and the same word to signify both "harlot" and "holy." "There shall be no *kedeshah* of the daughters of Israel" (Deut. xxiii. 17) means no female consecrated to the temple worship. Kuenen says "it is natural to assume that this impurity was practised in the worship of Jahveh, however much soever the lawgiver abhors it." It must be noticed, too, that there is no absolute prohibition. It only insists that the slaves of desire shall not be of the house of Israel, and stipulates that the money so obtained shall not be dedicated to Jahveh. That this was the custom both in Samaria and Jerusalem, as in Babylon, may be gathered from Micah i. 7,

and Hosea iv. 14.

Dr. Kalisch, by birth a Jew and one of the most fair-minded of biblical scholars, says in his note on Leviticus xix. 29: "The unchaste worship of Ashtarte, known also as Beltis and Tanais, Ishtar, Mylitta, and Anaitis, Asherah and Ashtaroth, flourished among the Hebrews at all times, both in the kingdom of Judah and Israel; it consisted in presenting to the goddess, who was revered as the female principle of conception and birth, the virginity of maidens as a first-fruit offering; and it was associated with the utmost licentiousness. This-degrading service took such deep root, that in the Assyrian period it was even extended by the adoption of new rites borrowed from Eastern Asia, and described by the name of 'Tents of the Maidens' (Succoth Benoth); and it left its mark in the Hebrew language itself, which ordinarily expressed the notion courtesan by 'a consecrated woman' (Kadeshah), and that of sodomite by 'consecrated man' (Kadesh)."

The Succoth Benoth in 2 Kings xvii. 30, may be freely rendered Tabernacles of Venus. Venus is plausibly derived from Benoth, whose worship was at an early time disseminated from Carthage and other parts of Africa to the shores of Italy. The merriest festival among the Jews was the Feast of Tabernacles. Plutarch (who suggests that the pig was originally worshipped by the Jews, a position endorsed by Mr. J. G. Frazer, in his *Golden Bough*, vol. ii., pp. 52, 53) says the Jewish feast of Tabernacles

"is exactly agreeable to the holy rites of Bacchus."<sup>8</sup> He adds, "What they do within I know not, but it is very probable that they perform the rites of Bacchus."

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his Commentary on 2 Kings xvii. 30, gives the following:—"Succoth-benoth maybe literally translated, *The Tabernacle of the Daughters, or Young Women*; or if *Benoth* be taken as the name of a female idol, from birth, *to build up, procreate, children*, then the words will express the tabernacles sacred to the productive powers feminine. And, agreeably to this latter exposition, the rabbins say that the emblem was a hen and chickens. But however this may be, there is no room to doubt that these *succoth* were *tabernacles*, wherein young women exposed themselves to prostitution in honor of the Babylon goddess Melitta." Herodotus (lib. i., c. 199; Rawlinson) says: "Every woman born in the country must once in her life go and sit down in the precinct of Venus, and there consort with a stranger. Many of the wealthier sort, who are too proud to mix with the others, drive in covered carriages to the precinct, followed by a goodly train of attendants, and there take their station. But the larger number seat themselves within the holy enclosure with wreaths of string about their heads; and here there is always a great crowd, some coming and others going; lines of cord mark out paths in all directions among the women, and the strangers pass along them to make their choice. A woman who has once taken her seat is not allowed to

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<sup>8</sup> Symposiacs, bk. iv., queat. 6, p. 310, vol. iii., Plutarch's Morals, 1870.

return home till one of the strangers throws a silver coin into her lap, and takes her with him beyond the holy ground. When he throws the coin he says these words—"The goddess Mylitta prosper thee" (Venus is called Mylitta by the Assyrians). The silver coin may be of any size; it cannot be refused, for that is forbidden by the law, since once thrown it is sacred. The woman goes with the first man who throws her money, and rejects no one. When she has gone with him, and so satisfied the goddess, she returns home, and from that time forth no gift, however great, will prevail with her. Such of the women as are tall and beautiful are soon released, but others who are ugly have to stay a long time before they can fulfil the law. Some have waited three or four years in the precinct. A custom very much like this is also found in certain parts of the island of Cyprus." This custom is alluded to in the Apocryphal Epistle of Jeremy (Barch vi. 43): "The women also with cords about them sitting in the ways, burnt bran for perfume; but if any of them, drawn by some that passeth by, lie with him, she reproacheth her fellow, that she was not thought as worthy as herself, nor her cord broken." The Commentary published by the S. P. C. K. says, "Women with cords about them," the token that they were devotees of Mylitta, the Babylonian Venus, called in 2 Kings xvii. 30, 'Succoth-benoth,' the ropes denoting the obligation of the vow which they had taken upon themselves." Valerius Maximus speaks of a temple of Sicca Venus in Africa, where a similar custom obtained. Strabo also mentions the custom (lib. xvi.,

c. i., 20), and says, "The money is considered as consecrated to Venus." In book xi., c. xiv., 16, Strabo says the Armenians pay particular reverence to Anaïtes. "They dedicate there to her service male and female slaves; in this there is nothing remarkable, but it is surprising that persons of the highest rank in the nation consecrate their virgin daughters to the goddess. It is customary for these women, after being prostituted a long period at the temple of Anaïtes, to be disposed of in marriage, no one disdaining a connection with such persons. Herodotus mentions something similar respecting the Lydian women, all of whom prostitute themselves." Of the temple of Venus at Corinth, Strabo says "it had more than a thousand women consecrated to the service of the goddess, courtesans, whom men and women had dedicated as offerings to the goddess"; and of Comana, in Cappadocia, he has a similar relation (bk. xii., c. iii., 36).

Dr. Kalisch also says Baal Peor "was probably the principle of generation *par excellence*, and at his festivals virgins were accustomed to yield themselves in his honor. To this disgraceful idolatry the Hebrews were addicted from very early times; they are related to have already been smitten on account of it by a fearful plague which destroyed 24,000 worshippers, and they seem to have clung to its shameful practices in later periods."<sup>9</sup> Jerome says plainly that Baal-Peor was Priapus, which some derive from Peor Apis. Hosea says (ix. 10, Revised Version) "they came to Baal-Peor and consecrated themselves unto the

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<sup>9</sup> Leviticus, p. 364.

shameful thing, and became abominable like that which they loved"; see, too, Num. xxvi. 1, 3. Amos (ii. 7,8) says a son and a father go in unto the same maid in the house of God to profane Jahveh's holy name, so that it appears this "maid" was regarded as in the service of Jahveh. Maimonides says it was known that the worship of Baal-Peor was by uncovering of the nakedness; and this he makes the reason why God commanded the priests to make themselves breeches to wear at the time of service, and why they might not go up to the altar by steps that their nakedness might not be discovered.<sup>10</sup> Jules Soury says<sup>11</sup> "The tents of the sacred prostitutes were generally erected on the high places."

In the temple at Jerusalem the women wove hangings for the Asherah (2 Kings xxiii. 7), that is for concealment in the worship of the genetrix, and in the same precincts were the houses of prostitute priests (see also 1 Kings xiv. 24; xv. 12; xxii. 46. Luther translates "*Hurer*"). Although Josiah destroyed these, B.C. 624, Kalisch says "The image of Ashtarte was probably erected again in the inner court (Jer. xxxii. 34; Ezek. viii. 6)." Ezekiel says (xvi. 16), "And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colors and playedst the harlot thereupon," and (v. 24) "Thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street," which is plainly translated in the Roman Catholic Douay version

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<sup>10</sup> That even more shameful practices were once common is evident from the narratives in Genesis xix. and Judges xix.

<sup>11</sup> Religion of Israel chap. ix., p. 71.

"Thou didst also build thee a common stew and madest thee a brothel house in every street." The "strange woman," against whom the Proverbs warns, practised her profession under cover of religion (see Prov. vii. 14). The "peace offerings" there alluded to were religious sacrifices.

Together with their other functions the Kadeshah, like the eastern nautch girls and bayaderes, devoted themselves to dancing and music (see Isaiah xxiii. 16). Dancing was an important part of ancient religious worship, as may be noticed in the case of King David, who danced before the ark, clad only in a linen ephod, probably a symbolic emblem (see Judges viii. 27), to the scandal of his wife, whom he had purchased by a trophy of two hundred foreskins from the uncircumcised Philistines (1 Sam. xviii. 27; 2 Sam. vi. 14-16). When the Israelites worshipped the golden calf they danced naked (Exodus xxxii. 19, 25). They sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to *play*, the word being the same as that used in Gen. xxvi. 8. The word *chag* is frequently translated "feast," and means "dance." In the wide prevalence of sacred prostitution Sir John Lubbock sees a corroboration of his hypothesis of communal marriage. Mr. Wake, however, refers it to the custom of sexual hospitality, a practice widely spread among all savage races, the rite like that of blood covenanting being associated with ideas of kinship and friendliness.

We have seen that the early Jews shared in the phallic worship of the nations around them. Despite the war against Baal and Asherah worship by the prophets of Jahveh, it was common in

the time of the Judges (iii. 7). Solomon himself was a worshipper of Ashtoreth, a faith doubtless after the heart of the sensual sultan (1 Kings xi. 5). The people of Judah "built them high places and phalli and ashera on every high hill and under every green tree. And there were also Sodomites in the land" (1 Kings xiv. 23, 24). The mother of Asa made "an abominable image for an Asherah" (1 Kings xv. 13).<sup>12</sup> The images of Asherah were kept in the house of Jahveh till the time of Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 6). Dr. Kuenen says (*Religion of Israel*, vol. i., p. 80), "the images, pillars and asheras were not considered by those who worshipped them as antagonistic to the acknowledgment of Jahveh as the God of Israel." The same writer contends that Jeroboam exhibiting the calves or young bulls could truly say "These be thy gods, O Israel." Remembering, too, that every Jew bears in his own body the mark of a special covenant with the Lord, the reader may take up his Bible and find much over which pious preachers and commentators have woven a pretty close veil. I will briefly notice a few particulars.

Without going into the question of the translation of Genesis i. 2, it is evident from v. 27 that God is hermaphrodite. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female (zakar and nekaba) created he them."

It is not difficult to find traces of phallicism in the allegory of the Garden of Eden. This has been noticed from the earliest

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<sup>12</sup> Larousse, in his *Grande Dictionnaire Universelle*, says: "Le phallos hébraïque fut pedant neuf cent ans le rival souvent victorieux de Jéhovah."

times. The rabbis classed the first chapters of Genesis with the Song of Solomon and certain portions of Ezekiel as not to be read by anyone under thirty. The Manichæans and other early Christians held the phallic view. Clement of Alexandria (Strom iii.) admits the sin of Adam consists in a premature indulgence of the sexual appetite. This view explains why knowledge was prohibited and why the first effect of the fall was the perception of nakedness. Basilides contended that we should reverence the serpent because it induced Eve to share the caresses of Adam, without which the human race would never have existed. Many modern writers, notably Beverland and Dr. Donaldson, have sustained the phallic interpretation. Archbishop Whately is also said to have advocated a similar opinion in an anonymous Latin work published in Germany. Dr. Donaldson, who was renowned as a scholar, makes some curious versions of the Hebrew. His translation of the alleged "Messianic promise" in Genesis iii. 15, his adversary, Dr. Perowne, the present Dean of Peterborough, says, is "so gross that it will not bear rendering into English." A good Hebraist, a Jew by birth, who had never heard of Dr. Donaldson's *Jashar*, gave me an exactly similar rendering of this verse—which makes it a representation of coition—and instanced the phrase "the serpent was more subtle than the other beasts of the field," as an illustration of early Jewish humor.

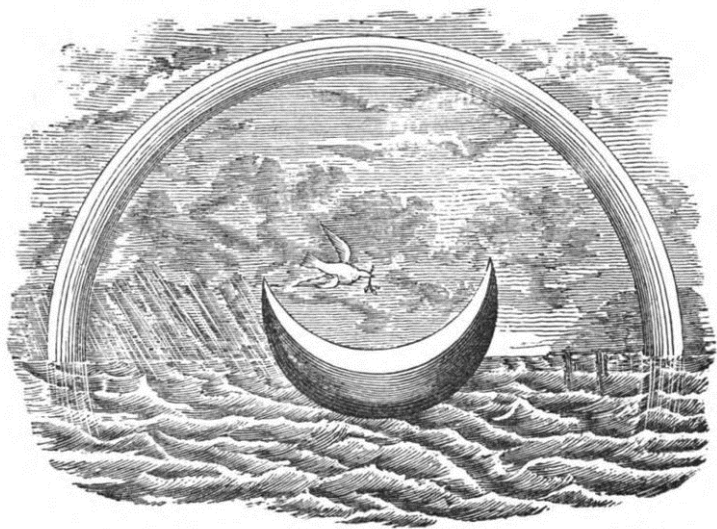
The French physician, Parise, eloquently says: "This sublime gift of transmitting life—fatal prerogative, which man continually forfeits—at once the mainstay of morality by means of family

ties, and the powerful cause of depravity—the energetic spring of life and health—the ceaseless source of disease and infirmity—this faculty involves almost all that man can attain of earthly happiness or misfortune, of earthly pleasure or of pain; and the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, is the symbol of it, as true as it is expressive."

Dr. Adam Clarke was so impressed by the difficulty of the serpent having originally gone erect, that he thinks that *nachash* means "a creature of the ape or ourang-outang kind." Yet it has been suggested that a key to the word may be found in Ezekiel xvi. 36, where it is translated "filthiness." There is nothing whatever in the story to show that the serpent is the Devil. This was an after idea when the Devil had become the symbol of passion and the instigator of lust. De Gubernatis, in his *Zoological Mythology* (vol. ii., p. 399), says "The phallic serpent is the cause of the fall of the first man." Many other difficulties in the story become less obscure when it is viewed as a remnant in which a phallic element is embodied.

Some have detected a phallic signification in the story of the ark and the deluge, a legend capable of many interpretations. The phallic view is represented in the symbols in fig. 6, taken from Jacob Bryant's *Mythology*, vol. iv., p. 286, in which the rainbow overshadows the mystic ark, which carries the life across the restless flood of time, which drowns everything that has life, and promises that seed-time and harvest shall endure, and the Ruach broods over the waters. Gerald Massey devotes a section

of his *Natural Genesis* to the typology of the Ark and the Deluge. M. Clermont-Ganneau holds that the Ruach was the feminine companion of Elohim, and that this idea was continued under the name of Kodesh the Euach Kodesh or Holy Ghost, which with the Jews and early Nazarene Christians was feminine.



**Fig. 6.—The Mystic Ark.**

Another point to be briefly noticed is Jacob's anointing of the stone which he slept on, and then erected and called Beth El, or "house of God," the residence of the creative spirit. This was a

phallic rite. Exactly the same anointing of the linga is performed in India till this day. It is evident that Jacob's worship of the pillar was orthodox at the time the narrative was written, for God sends him back to the pillar to perform his vow (see Gen. xxxv.), and again he goes through phallic rites (v. 14). When Paul says, "Flee fornication. Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" he elevates and spiritualises the conception which lay in the word Bethel. According to Philo Byblius, the huge stones common in Syria, as in so many lands, were called Baetylia. Kalisch says it is not extravagant to suppose that the words are identical. From this custom of anointing comes the conception of the Messiah, or Christ the Anointed. Kissing the stone or god appears also to have been a religious rite. Thus we read of kissing Baal (1 Kings xix. 18) and kissing the "calves" (Hos. xiii. 2). Epi-phanus said that the Ophites kissed the serpent which this wretched people called the Eucharist. They concluded the ceremonies by singing a hymn through him to the Supreme Father. (See Fergusson's *Tree and Serpent Worship*, p. 9.) The kissing of the Mohammedan saint's member and of the Pope's toe are probably connected. Amalarius, who lived in the age of Charlemagne, says that on Friday (*Dies Veneris*) the Pope and cardinals crawl on all fours along the aisles of St. Peter's to a cross before an altar which they salute and kiss.

Mr. Grant Allen, in an article on Sacred Stones in the *Fortnightly Review*, Jan., 1890, says:

"Samuel judged Israel every year at Bethel, the place of

Jacob's sacred pillar; at Gilgal, the place where Joshua's twelve stones were set up; and at Mizpeh, where stood the cairn surmounted by the pillars of Laban's servant. He, himself, 'took a stone and set it up between Mizpeh and Shen'; and its very name, Ebenezer, 'the stone of help,' shows that it was originally worshipped before proceeding on an expedition, though the Jehovistic gloss, 'saying Hitherto the Lord hath helped us,' does its best, of course, to obscure the real meaning. It was to the stone circle of Gilgal that Samuel directed Saul to go down, saying; 'I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings.' It was at the cairn of Mizpeh that Saul was chosen king; and after the victory over the Ammonites, Saul went once more to the great Stonehenge at Gilgal to 'review the kingdom,' and 'There they made Saul king before Jahveh in Gilgal; and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before Jahyeh.'"

This last passage, as Mr. Allen points out, is very instructive, as showing that in the opinion of the writer, Jahveh was then domiciled at Gilgal.

M. Soury, in his note to chap. ii. of his *Religion of Israel*, says: "It is needful to point out, with M. Schrader, that the most ancient Babylonian inscriptions in the Accadian tongues, those of Uruk and of Ur Kasdim, preserved in the British Museum, were engraved on clay phalii. We have here the origin of the usages and customs of religion so long followed among the Oanaanites and Hebrews (Y. Movers, *Die Phonizer*, I., 591, *et passim*)."

In the old hymn embodied in Deut. xxxii., God is frequently called *Tsur*, "The Rock which begat thee," etc. Major-General Forlong believes "that the Jews had a Phallus or phallic symbol in their 'Ark of the Testimony' or Ark of the Eduth, a word which I hold tries to veil the real objects" (*Rivers of Life*, vol. i., p. 149). He does not scruple to say this was "the real God of the Jews; that God of the Ark or the Testimony, but surely not of Europe" (vol. i., p. 169). This contention is forcibly suggested by the picture of the Egyptian Ark found in Dr. Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, art.

"Ark of the Covenant." The Ark of the Testimony, or significant thing, the tabernacle of the testimony and the veil of the testimony alluded to in Exodus are never mentioned in Deuteronomy. The Rev. T. Wilson, in his *Archaeological Dictionary*, art. "Sanctum," observes that "the Ark of the Covenant, which was the greatest ornament of the first temple, was wanting in the second, but a stone of three inches thick, it is said, supplied its place, which they [the Jews] further assert is still in the Mahommedan mosque called *the temple of the Stone*, which is erected where the Temple of Jerusalem stood." This forcibly suggests that the nature of the "God in the box" which the Jews carried about with them was similar to that carried in the processions of Osiris and Dionysos. According to 1 Kings viii. 9 the Ark contained two stones, but the much later writer of Heb. ix. 4 makes it contain the golden pot with manna, Aaron's rod, and the tables of the covenant.

Mr. Sellon, in the papers of the Anthropological Society of

London, 1863-4, p. 327, argues: "There would also now appear good ground for believing that the ark of the covenant, held so sacred by the Jews, contained nothing more nor less than a phallus, the ark being the type of the Argha or Yoni (Linga worship) of India." Hargrave Jennings (*Phallicism*, p. 67) says: "We know from the Jewish records that the ark contained a table of stone.... That stone was phallic, and yet identical with the sacred name Jehovah, which, written in unpointed Hebrew with four letters, is JEVE, or JHVH (the H being merely an aspirate and the same as E). This process leaves us the two letters I and V (in another form, U); then, if we place the I in the V, we have the 'Holy of Holies'; we also have the Linga and Yoni and Argha of the Hindus, the Isvara and 'Supreme Lord'; and here we have the whole secret of its mystic and arc-celestial import confirmed in itself by being identical with the Ling-yoni of the Ark of the Covenant."

In Hosea, who finds it quite natural that the Lord should tell him "Go take unto thee a wife of whoredoms," we find the Lord called his *zakar* (translated memorial, xii. 5). In the same prophet we read that Jahveh declares thou shalt call me *Ishi* (my husband); and shalt no more call me Baali (ii. 16). Again he says to his people "I am your husband" (Hosea iii. 14); "Thy maker is thine husband; Jahveh Sabaoth is his name" (Isaiah liv. 5). I was an husband to them, saith Jahveh (Jer. xxxi. 32. See also Jer. iii. 20 and Ezek. xvi. 32). God even does not scruple to represent himself in Ezekiel xxiii. as the husband of two adulterous sisters.

Taking to other deities is continually called whoring and adultery. See Exod. xxxiv. 15, 16; Lev. xx. 5; Num. xxv. 1-3; Deut. xxxi. 16; xxxii. 16-21; Jud. ii. 17; viii. 27; 1 Chron. v. 25; Ps. lxxiii. 27; cvi. 39; Jer. iii. 1, 2, 6; Ezek. xvi. 15, 17; xxiii. 3; Hos. i. 2; ii. 4, 5; iv. 13, 15; v. 3, 4; ix. 7. In the Wisdom of Solomon (xiv. 12), we read: "For the devising of idols was the beginning of *spiritual* fornication, and the invention of them the corruption of life." Here the word "spiritual" is deliberately inserted to pervert the meaning. Let any one reflect how such coarse expressions could continually be used unless the writers were used to phallic worship. Further consider the narrative in Numbers xxxi., where the Lord takes a maiden tribute out of 32,000 girls, who must all have been examined. Vestal virgins and nuns are all consecrated like the kadeshim to the god, and the god is personified by the priest. In this sense phallicism is the key of all the creeds.

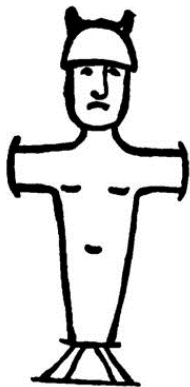


Fig. 7.

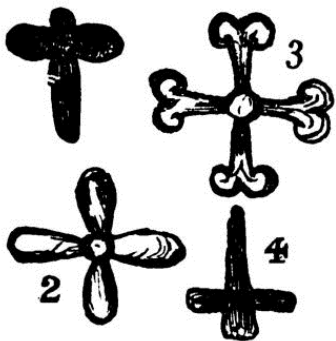


Fig. 8.

That some remnants of phallicism may be traced even in Christianity, will be evident to the readers of *Anacalypsis*, by Godfrey Higgins; *Ancient Faiths Embodied in Ancient Names*, by Dr. Thomas Inman, and *Ancient Pagan and Modern Christian Symbolism Exposed and Explained*, by the same author; the valuable *Rivers of Life*, by Major-General Forlong; a little book on *Idolomania*, by "Investigator Abhorrens"; and another on *The Masculine Cross*, by Sha Rocco (New York, 1874). The sign of the cross, certainly long pre-Christian in the Egyptian sign for life, is specially dealt with in the last two works. In fig. 7 we see the connection of the Egyptian tau with the Hermæ. Of fig. 8 General Forlong (*Rivers of Life*, vol i., p 65) says: "The Samaritan cross, which they stamped on their coins, was No. 1, but the Norseman preferred No. 2 (the circle and four stout arms of

equal size and weight), and called it Tor's hammer. It is somewhat like No. 3, which the Greek Christians early adopted, though this is more decidedly phallic, and shows clearly the meaning so much insisted on by some writers as to all meeting in the centre."

The custom of eating fish on Friday (*Dies Veneris*) is considered a survival of the days when a peculiar sexual signification was given to the fish, which has such a prominent place in Christian symbolism. Fig. 9 illustrates the origin of the bishop's mitre.

The *vescica piscis*, or fish's bladder (fig. 10), is a well-known ecclesiastical emblem of the virgin, often used in church windows, seals, etc. The symbol is equally known in India. Its real nature is shown in fig. 11, discovered by Layard at Nineveh, depicting its worshipper seated on a lotus. The *vescica piscis* is conspicuously displayed in fig. 12, copied from a Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, printed at Venice 1582, with the license from the Inquisition, in which the Holy Dove darts his ray, fecundating the Holy Virgin. Many instances of Christ in an elliptical aureole may be seen in Didron's *Christian Iconography*, fig. 71, p. 281, vol. i. strikingly resembles our figure.



Fig. 9.



Fig. 10.



Fig. 11.



Fig. 12.

# CIRCUMCISION

Among the many traces that the Jews were once savages I place the distinguishing mark of their race, circumcision. Many explanations have been given of this curious custom. The account, in Genesis xvii. that God commanded it to Abraham, at the ripe age of 99, critics agree was written after the exile—that is, thirteen hundred years after the death of the patriarch. Now, there is evidence from the Egyptian monuments that circumcision was known long before Abraham's time. This constrains Dr. Kitto to say, "God might have selected a practice already in use among other nations." If so, God must have had a curious taste and an uninventive mind. Why, having made people as they are, he should order his chosen race to be mutilated, must be a puzzle to the orthodox. Some writers have absurdly argued that the Egyptians borrowed from the Jews, whom they despised (see Genesis xliii. 32). Apart from the evidence of Herodotus and of monuments and mummies to the contrary, this view is never suggested in the Bible, but the testimony of the book of Joshua (v. 9) implies the reverse.

The narrative of the Lord's attempted assassination of Moses (Exodus iv. 24-26), which we shall shortly examine, has the most archaic complexion of any of the biblical references to circumcision, and from it Dr. T. K. Cheyne argues that the rite is

of Arabian origin.<sup>13</sup> If instituted in the time of Abraham under the penalty of death, it is curious that Moses never circumcised his own son, nor saw to its performance in the wilderness for forty years, so that Joshua had personally to circumcise over a million males at Gilgal.

Let us now look at the various theories of the origin and purpose of circumcision. Rationalising Jews say it is of a sanatory character. This view, though found in Philo, may be dismissed as an after theory to meet a religious difficulty. Most Asiatic nations are uncircumcised. The Philistines did not practice the rite, nor did the Syrians in the time of Josephus. Even if in a few cases it might possibly be beneficial, that would be no sufficient reason for imposing it on a whole nation under penalty of death. The fact is, the rite is a religious one. Indeed, upon its retention the early controversy between Jews and Christians largely turned.

The view that it is an imposed mutilation of a subject race is suggested in Dr. Remondino's *History of Circumcision*, and has the high authority of Herbert Spencer. He instances the trophy of foreskins taken by David as a dowry for Saul's daughter (1 Sam. xviii. 27), and that Hyrcanus having subdued the Idumeans, made them submit to circumcision. This, however, may have been a part of the policy of making them one with the Jewish race in being tributary to Jahveh. It is not easy to see how a mutilation imposed from without should ever become a part of the pride of race and be enjoined when all other mutilations were forbidden.

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<sup>13</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, article "Circumcision."

I incline to a view which, although in accord with early sociological conditions, I have never yet seen stated. It was suggested to me by the passage where Tacitus alludes to this custom among the Jews. It is that circumcision is of the nature of savage totem and tattoo marks—a device to distinguish the tribal division from other tribes, and to indicate those with whom the tribe might marry.<sup>14</sup> If, as has been suggested, the meaning of Genesis xxxiv. 14 is "one who is uncircumcised is as a woman to us," this view is confirmed. The Jewish abhorrence to mixed marriages and "the bed of the uncircumcised" is well known.

The Hebrew distinguishing term for male—*zachar*, which also means record or *memorial*—will agree with this view, as also with that of Dr. Trumbull, which associates circumcision with that of blood-covenanting. It seems evident from the narrative in Exodus iv., where Zipporah, after circumcising her son, says—not as generally understood to Moses—"A bloody husband art thou to me," but to Jahveh, "Thou art a *Kathan* of blood"—i.e., one made akin by circumcision—that this idea of a blood-covenant became interwoven with the rite. It is to be noticed that in the covenant between God and the Jews women had no share.

Dr. Kuenen holds that circumcision is of the nature of a substitute for human sacrifice. No doubt the Jews had such sacrifices, and were familiar with the idea of substitution; but

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<sup>14</sup> What Tacitus says is, "They do not eat with strangers or make marriages with them, and this nation, otherwise most prone to debauchery, abstains from all strange women. They have introduced circumcision in order to distinguish themselves thereby."

with this I rather connect the Passover observance. If a sacrifice, it was doubtless phallic—an offering to the god on whom the fruit of the womb depended; possibly a substitution for the barbarous rites by which the priests of Cybele were instituted for office. Ptolemy's Tetrabibles, speaking of the neighboring nations, says: "Many of them devote their genitals to their divinities." According to Gerald Massey, "it was a dedication of the first-fruits of the male at the shrine of the virgin mother and child, which was one way of passing the seed through the fire to Moloch."

Westrop and Wake (*Phallicism in Ancient Religion*, p. 37) say "Circumcision, in its inception, is a purely phallic rite, having for its aim the marking of that which from its associations is viewed with peculiar veneration, and it converts the two phases of this superstition which have for their object respectively the *instrument* of generation and the *agent*."

General Forlong, who maintains the phallic view, also holds that "truth compels us to attach an Aphrodisiacal character to the mutilations of this highly sensual Jewish race." This view will not be hastily rejected by those who know of the many strange devices resorted to by barbarous peoples. Some have believed that circumcision enhances fecundity.

With the exception of the two first views, which I dismiss as not explaining the religious and permanent character of the rite, all these views imply a special regard being paid to the emblem of generation. This is further confirmed by the

manner of oath-taking customary among the ancient Jews. When Abraham swore his servant, he said, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh" (Gen. xxiv. 2). The same euphemism is used in the account of Jacob swearing Joseph (xlvii. 29), and the custom, which has lasted among Arabs until modern days, is also alluded to in the Hebrew of 1 Chronicles xxix. 24. The Latin testiculi seems to point to a similar custom. In the law that no uncircumcised or sexually-imperfect person might appear before the shrine of the Lord, we may see yet further evidence that Jewish worship was akin to the phallic rites of the nations around them.

# MOSES AT THE INN

And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the lord met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said,

Surely a bloody husband art thou to me.

So he let him go: then she said,

A bloody husband thou art, because of the circumcision.

—*Exodus iv. 24-26.*

Anyone who wishes to note the various shifts to which orthodox people will resort in their attempts to pass off the barbarous records of the Jews as God's holy word, should demand an explanation of the attempted assassination of Moses by Jehovah, as recorded in the above verses. Some commentators say that by the Lord is meant "the angel of the Lord," as if Jehovah was incapable of personally conducting so nefarious a piece of business. Bishop Patrick says "The Schechinah, I suppose, appeared to him—appeared with a drawn sword, perhaps, as he did to Balaam and David." Some say it was Moses's firstborn the Lord sought to kill. Some say it was at the child's feet the foreskin was cast, others at those of Moses, but the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem more properly represent that it was at the feet of God, in order to pacify him.

The story certainly presents some difficulties. Moses had

just had one of his numerous interviews with Jehovah, who had told him to go back to Egypt, for all those are dead who sought his life. He is to tell Pharaoh that Israel is the Lord's firstborn, and that if Pharaoh will not let the Israelites go he will slay Pharaoh's firstborn. Then immediately follows this passage. Why this sudden change of conduct towards Moses, whose life Jehovah was apparently so anxious to save?

Adam Clarke says the meaning is that the son of Moses had not been circumcised, and therefore Jehovah was about to have slain the child because not in covenant with him by circumcision, and thus he intended [after his usual brutal fashion] to punish the disobedience of the father by the death of the son. Zip-porah getting acquainted with the nature of the case, and the danger to which her firstborn was exposed, took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son. By this act the displeasure of the Lord was turned aside, and Zipporah considered herself as now allied to God because of this circumcision. Old Adam tries to gloss over the attempted assassination of Moses by pretending it was only a child's life that was in danger. But we beg the reader to notice that no *child* is mentioned, but only a son whose age is unspecified. Dr. Clarke can hardly have read the treatise of John Frischl, *De Circumcisione Zipporo*, or he would surely have admitted that the person menaced with death was Moses, and not his son.

Other commentators say that Zipporah did not like the snipping business (although she seems to have understood it at once), and therefore addressed her husband opprobriously.

Circumcision, we may remark, was anciently performed with stone. The Septuagint version records how the flints with which Joshua circumcised the people at Gilgal were buried in his grave.

A nice specimen of the modern Christian method of semi-rationalising may be found in Dr. Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, to which the clergy usually turn for help in regard to any difficulties in connection with the sacred fetish they call the word of God. Smith says:

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