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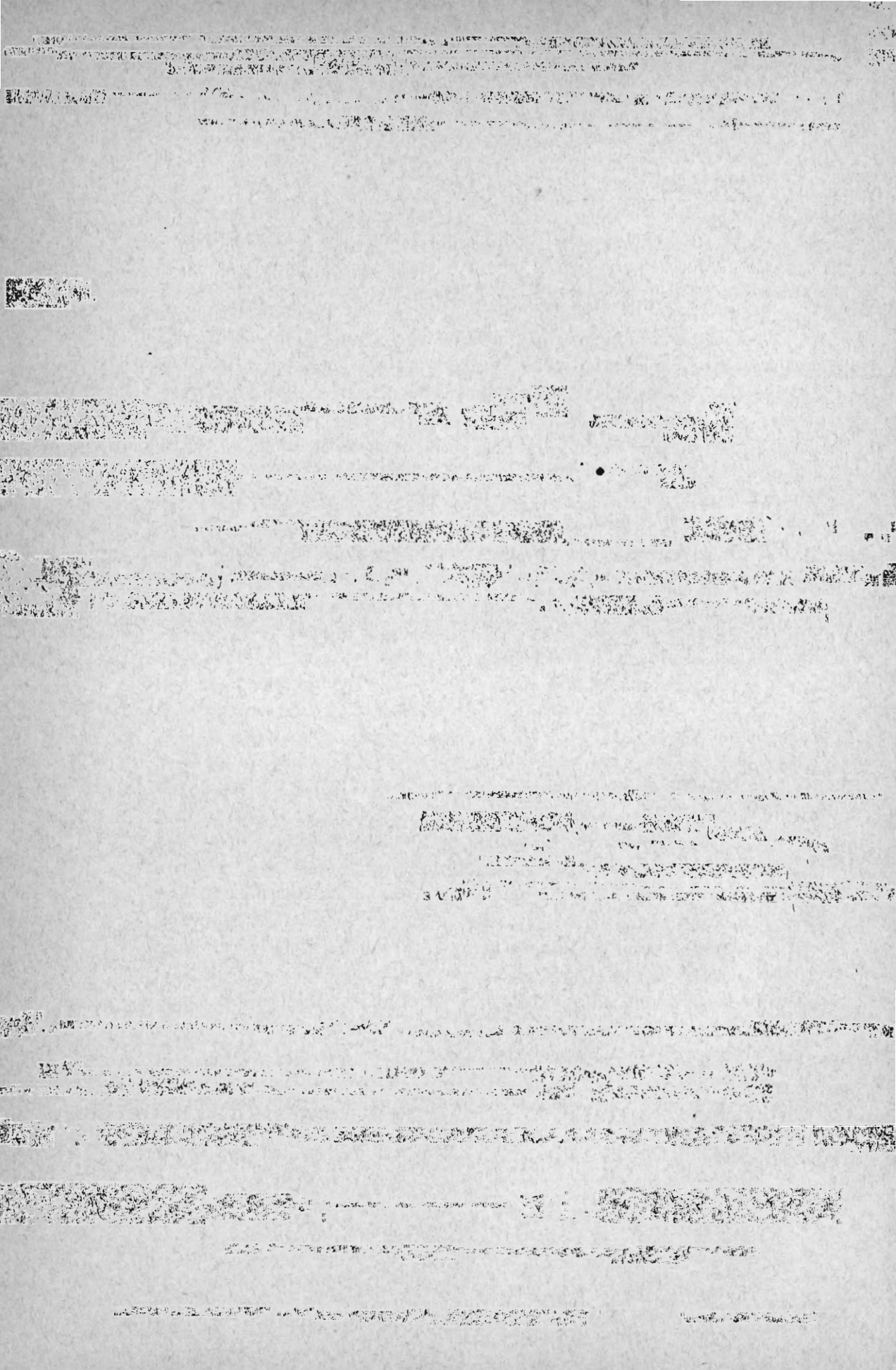

FOLK-LORE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

By J. G. FRAZER

It is now generally admitted that the ancient Hebrews did not attain to the high-water mark of their religion and morality at a single bound. Like every other people they passed through a long period of development before they reached those lofty conceptions of the divine nature and its relation to man which are the glory of Israel. The rising tide, if I may pursue the metaphor, did not flow onward with one broad unwavering sweep; it had many backward eddies, many of those retrograde movements which in the language of the Bible are familiar to us as backslidings. So the great rollers break in thunder on a pebbly beach and then retire with a griding sound of pebbles which the retreating water sucks back with it into the sea. At such times we often doubt whether the tide is flowing or ebbing. So it must often have been with those who lived through some of the great epochs in the history of Israel. They also must have had many misgivings as to whether the movement of thought and conduct was on the whole forward or backward, whether the changes they witnessed would in the end prove for good or evil. The writings of the Hebrew prophets are full of these doubts and anxieties. They reflect a state of mind that seems to tremble on a knife-edge, to oscillate between hope and despair. From the brightest visions of future glory and bliss we plunge suddenly into the gloomiest forecasts of coming disaster and woe. It would be a great injustice to the prophets to imagine that these dark forebodings were nothing but the gigantic shadows of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt cast athwart the little land of Palestine, nothing but fearful anticipations of lost battles and national ruin. The prophets were patriots certainly, but they were much more. They were ethical teachers who viewed with burning indignation the base and cruel superstitions to which many, if not most, of their countrymen were slaves. To the best minds of Israel that moral bondage was worse than any merely political servitude could ever have been. So they never wearied of denouncing it in language

which by its fervour and insistence affords us some measure of the depth and extent of the evil that drew forth such fierce invectives.

In point of fact we learn from the prophetic writings as well as from the historical books that a mass of paganism, and a very gross paganism too, survived in Israel down practically to the close of the monarchy. The last great reformation of Jewish religion took place under King Josiah less than forty years before the capture of Jerusalem and the final destruction of the national independence; and down to that time, as we know from the Book of Kings, some of the worst rites of heathendom were practised at Jerusalem and even tolerated in the temple itself.[1] Thus we have evidence, abundant evidence, in the Old Testament that heathen superstitions persisted among the Jews to a late era. Such relics of barbarism we are accustomed to call survivals, because they have survived from rude ages into a period of higher culture despite all the humanizing and enlightening influences that have been at work. It is with a few of these survivals of ancient Semitic paganism that I propose to deal in this paper. At the outset it may be well to remind the reader that all such legacies of the past are not equally worthy of condemnation. Many of them are mere harmless absurdities, or, if they have not always been so, they have become so in the course of time, which has gently stripped them of their harsher features, leaving behind what is innocent and sometimes picturesque. These quaint survivals are what we commonly mean by folk-lore; and accordingly it is of some folk-lore elements in the Old Testament that I am about to write. I shall barely touch in passing on the darker and sadder side of Semitic heathendom.

§ 1. *The Mark of Cain.*

We read in Genesis that when Cain had murdered his brother Abel he was driven out from society to be a fugitive and vagabond on earth. Fearing to be slain by any one who might meet him, he remonstrated with God on the hardness of his lot, and God had so far compassion on him that he 'set a mark upon Cain, lest any man finding him should kill him'.[2] What was the mark that God put on the first murderer? or the sign that he appointed for him?

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 4–24.

[2] Genesis iv. 8–15 (Authorized Version). The Revised Version renders: 'and the Lord appointed a sign for Cain.' The most literal translation would be, 'set a sign to (or for) Cain.'

That we have here a reminiscence of some old custom observed by manslayers is highly probable; and, though we cannot hope to ascertain what the actual mark or sign was, a comparison of the customs observed by manslayers in other parts of the world may help us to understand at least its general significance. Robertson Smith thought that the mark in question was the tribal mark, a badge which every member of the tribe wore on his person, and which served to protect him by indicating that he belonged to a community that would avenge his murder.[1] Certainly such marks are common among savages. For example, among the Bedouins of to-day one of the chief tribal badges is the mode of wearing the hair.[2] In many parts of the world, notably in Africa, the tribal mark consists of a pattern tattooed or incised on some part of the person.[3] That such marks might serve as a protection to the tribesman in the way supposed by Robertson Smith seems probable; though on the other hand it is to be remembered that in a hostile country they would, on the contrary, increase his danger by advertising him as an enemy.

But even if we concede the protective value of a tribal mark, still the explanation thus offered of the mark of Cain seems hardly to fit the case. It is too general. Every member of a tribe was equally protected by such a mark, whether he was a manslayer or not. The whole drift of the narrative tends to show that the mark in question was not worn by every member of the community, but was peculiar to a murderer. Accordingly we seem driven to seek for an explanation in another direction.

From the narrative itself we gather that Cain was supposed to be obnoxious to other dangers than that of being slain as an outlaw by any one who met him. God is represented saying to him: 'What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now cursed art thou from the ground, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee

[1] W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*[2], p. 251.

[2] W. Robertson Smith, *loc. cit.*

[3] J. G. Frazer, *Totemism*, pp. 28 sq. The evidence there adduced might be indefinitely multiplied, especially for Africa. In the work to which I have referred I was mistaken in attempting to connect tribal marks with totemism. Probably such marks are seldom or never totemic, since they are common to all members of a tribe; whereas a totemic mark would be confined to one particular subdivision (clan or *gens*) of the tribe.

her strength; a fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth.'[1] Here it is obvious that the blood of his murdered brother is regarded as constituting a physical danger to the murderer; it taints the ground and prevents it from yielding its increase. Thus the murderer is thought to have poisoned the sources of life and thereby endangered the supply of food for himself, and perhaps for others. On this view it is intelligible that a homicide should be shunned and banished the country, to which his presence is a continual menace. He is plague-stricken, surrounded by a poisonous atmosphere, infected by a contagion of death; his very touch may blight the earth. Hence we can understand a certain rule of Attic law. A homicide who had been banished, and against whom in his absence a second charge had been brought, was allowed to return to Attica to plead in his defence, but he might not set foot on the land, he had to speak from a ship, and even the ship might not cast anchor or put out a gangway. The judges avoided all contact with the culprit, for they judged the case sitting or standing on the shore.[2] Clearly the intention of this rule of law was to put the manslayer in quarantine, lest by touching Attic earth even indirectly through the anchor or the gangway he should blast it. For the same reason, if such a man, sailing the sea, had the misfortune to be cast away on the country where his crime had been perpetrated, he was allowed indeed to camp on the shore till a ship came to take him off, but he was expected to keep his feet in the sea-water all the time[3]; evidently in order to counteract, or at least dilute, the poison which he was supposed to instil into the soil.

Thus a mark put on a homicide might be intended primarily not for his protection, but for the protection of the persons who met him; it might be a danger signal to warn them off. If it was so, it would serve at the same time indirectly to keep him scathless.

[1] Genesis iv. 10-12 (Revised Version).

[2] Demosthenes, xxiii. 77 sq., pp. 645 sq.; Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, 57; Pausanias, i. 28. 11; Pollux, viii. 120; Helladius, quoted by Photius, *Bibliotheca*, p. 535 a, lines 28 sqq., ed. I. Bekker. The rule which forbade the ship to cast anchor or to put out a gangway is mentioned only by Pollux. But Pollux had access to excellent authorities, and the rule bears the stamp of genuine antiquity. We may therefore safely dismiss as unauthorized the statement of Helladius that the ship cast anchor.

[3] Plato, *Laws*, ix. 8, p. 866 cd. In ancient Greece, for a different reason, when a man died of dropsy, his children were made to sit with their feet in water until the body was burned (Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta*, 14). See my *Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship*, p. 47.

However, a closer examination of the danger which clung like a plague to the manslayer may lead us to a different interpretation of the murderer's mark. Here again, as in the customs just mentioned, we seem to touch the bed-rock of superstition in Attica. Plato tells us that according to a very ancient Greek belief the ghost of a man who had just been killed was angry with his slayer and troubled him, being enraged at the sight of the homicide going about in his old familiar haunts; hence it was needful for the manslayer to depart from his country for a year until the wrath of the ghost had cooled down, nor might he return till sacrifices had been offered and ceremonies of purification performed. If the victim chanced to be a foreigner, the homicide had to shun the native land of the dead man as well as his own, and in going into banishment he had to follow a prescribed road [1], for clearly it would never do to let him rove about the country with the angry ghost at his heels. Among the Yaos and perhaps other tribes of British Central Africa 'the man who kills his own slave, or even his younger brother or other ward, is not amenable to justice, but—unless he can protect himself by a charm—he is afraid of the mysterious *chirope* which overtakes those who shed blood within the tribe. The chief, to whom he goes if he has committed such a murder, procures the charm for him from his own medicine-man, and uses it himself as well, "because of the blood that has been shed in his land."' [2] The mysterious *chirope* which thus overtakes a man who has shed blood within the tribe is explained to be either an illness or a sort of madness which comes over him, as it is said to have come over Orestes after the murder of his mother [3], until he has performed an expiatory ceremony; and 'the idea is that the spirit of the slain enters into the body of the slayer'. When the homicide has used the charm provided by the chief, which may be either drunk or administered in a bath, the danger passes away.[4]

This fear of the wrathful ghost of the slain is probably at the root of many ancient customs observed in connexion with homicide; it may well have been one of the principal motives for inflicting capital punishment on murderers. For if such persons

[1] Plato, *Laws*, ix. 8, pp. 865 d-866 a; Demosthenes, xxiii. pp. 643 sq.; Hesychius, s. v. ἀπενιαυτισμός.

[2] A. Werner, *The Natives of British Central Africa* (London, 1906), p. 265.

[3] Pausanias, viii. 34. 1-4.

[4] A. Werner, *op. cit.*, pp. 67 sq.; Duff Macdonald, *Africana*, i. 168.

are dogged by a powerful and angry spirit which makes them a danger to their fellows, society can obviously protect itself very simply by sacrificing the murderer to the ghost, in other words by putting him to death. But then it becomes necessary to guard the executioners in their turn against the ghosts of their victims, and this has been done, for example, by West African negroes[1] and some Indians of Brazil. Among the latter people a man who had publicly executed a prisoner had to fast and lie in his hammock for three days, without setting foot on the ground; further, he had to make incisions in his breast, arms, and other parts of his body, and a black powder was rubbed into the wounds which left ineffaceable scars so artistically arranged that they presented the appearance of a tight-fitting garment. It was believed that he would die if he did not observe these rules and draw blood from his own body after slaughtering the captive.[2] The fear of his victim's ghost is not indeed mentioned by our authorities as the motive for practising these customs. But that it was the real motive is not only suggested by the analogy of the West African customs, but is practically proved by a custom which these same Brazilian Indians observed before the execution. They formally invited the doomed man to avenge his death, and for this purpose they supplied him with stones or potsherds, which he hurled at his guards, while they protected themselves against the missiles with

[1] G. Loyer, in Astley's *Voyages and Travels*, ii. 444; Father Baudin, 'Féticheurs ou ministres religieux des Nègres de la Guinee,' *Missions Catholiques*, xvi. (1884), p. 332; Major A. G. Leonard, *The lower Niger and its Tribes* (London, 1906), p. 180. According to Loyer the executioners are reckoned impure for three days after an execution, and build a separate hut for themselves at a distance from the village. There they live in seclusion for three days, after which they take the hut to pieces, leaving not so much as the ashes of their fire. Then 'the first executioner, having a pot on his head, leads them to the place where the criminal suffered. There they all call him thrice by his name. The first executioner breaks his pot, and, leaving their old rags and bundles, they all scamper home.' According to Father Baudin, the executioner at Porto Novo, on the coast of Guinea, used to decorate his walls with the jawbones of his victims to prevent their ghosts from troubling him at night.

[2] F. A. Thevet, *Les singularitez de la France Antarctique, autrement nommée Amerique* (Antwerp, 1558), p. 76; *id.*, *Cosmographie Universelle* (Paris, 1575), p. 946 [980]; P. de Magalhanes de Gandavo, *Histoire de la province de Sancta-Cruz* (Paris, 1837), pp. 138 sq.; *The Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse* (London, Hakluyt Society, 1874), p. 159; J. Lery, *Historia navigationis in Brasiliam quae et America dicitur* (1586), p. 192; R. Southey, *History of Brazil*, i.[2] 232.

shields made of hide.[1] The form of the invitation, which ran thus, 'Avenge your death before your decease', clearly implies a hope that if the man had thus satisfied his thirst for vengeance in his lifetime his ghost would not trouble them after death. But to make assurance doubly sure the executioner secluded himself and observed the curious precautions which I have described. The drawing of blood from his own body, which was regarded as essential to the preservation of his life[2], may have been intended to satisfy the ghost's demand of blood for blood, while the permanent marks left on the slayer's body would be a standing evidence that he had given satisfaction to his victim. Could any reasonable ghost ask for more?

This interpretation of the marks on the executioner's body is confirmed by the following custom. Among the natives of New Guinea, particularly near Finsch Harbour on the north-east coast, the kinsmen of a murdered man who have accepted a blood-wit instead of avenging his death take care to be marked with chalk on the forehead by the relatives of the murderer, 'lest the ghost should trouble them for failing to avenge his death and should carry off their pigs or make their teeth loose.'[3] In this custom it is not the murderer but the kinsmen of his victim who are marked, but the principle is the same. The ghost of the murdered man naturally turns in fury on his unkind relatives who have not exacted blood for his blood. But just as he is about to swoop down on them to loosen their teeth, or steal their pigs, or make himself unpleasant in other ways, he is brought up short by the sight of the white mark on their black or coffee-coloured brows. It is the receipt for the payment in full of the blood-wit: it has been literally chalked up there by his own kinsmen: he cannot truthfully deny their signature: he is balked, and turns away disappointed. The same mark might obviously be made for the same reason on the murderer's brow to prove that he had paid in cash, or whatever may be the local equivalent of cash, for the deed he had done, and that the ghost therefore had no further claim on him. Was the mark of Cain a mark of this sort? Was it a proof that he had paid the blood-wit? Was it a receipt for cash down?

It may have been so, but there is still another possibility to

[1] J. Lery, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

[2] P. de Magalhanes de Gandavo, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

[3] B. Hagen, *Unter den Papuas* (Wiesbaden, 1899), p. 254.

be considered. On the theory which I have just indicated it is obvious that the mark of Cain could only be put on a homicide when his victim was a man of the same tribe or community as himself, since it is only to men of the same tribe or community that compensation for homicide is paid. But the ghosts of slain enemies are certainly not less dreaded than the ghosts of slain friends; and if you cannot pacify them with a sum of money paid to their kinsfolk, what are you to do with them? Many plans have been adopted for the protection of warriors against the spirits of the men whom they have sent out of the world before their due time. Apparently one of these precautions is to disguise the slayer so that the ghost may not recognize him; another is to render his person in some way so formidable or so offensive that the spirit will not meddle with him. One or other of these motives may explain the following customs, which I select from a large number of similar cases.

Among the Ba-Yaka, a Bantu people of the Congo Free State, 'a man who has been killed in battle is supposed to send his soul to avenge his death on the person of the man who killed him; the latter, however, can escape the vengeance of the dead by wearing the red tail-feathers of the parrot in his hair, and painting his forehead red.'[1] Among the Thompson Indians of British Columbia it used to be customary for men who had slain enemies to blacken their faces. If this precaution were neglected it was believed that the spirits of their victims would blind them.[2] Among the Angoni, a Zulu tribe settled to the north of the Zambesi, warriors who have killed foes on an expedition smear their bodies and faces with ashes, hang garments of their victims on their persons, and tie ropes round their necks, so that the ends hang down over their shoulders or breasts. This costume they wear for three days after their return, and rising at break of day they run through the village uttering frightful yells to drive away the ghosts of the slain, which, if they were not thus banished, might bring sickness and misfortune on the inhabitants.[3] Among the Bantu tribes of Kavi-

[1] E. Torday and T. A. Joyce, 'Notes on the Ethnography of the Ba-Yaka,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxvi (1906), pp. 50 sq.

[2] J. Teit, 'The Thompson Indians of British Columbia,' *Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History*, vol. ii. *Anthropology*, i. [Part] iv. ([New York,] April, 1900), p. 357.

[3] C. Wiese, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Zulu im Norden des Zambesi,' *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, xxxii (1900), pp. 197 sq.

rondo, in eastern Africa, when a man has killed an enemy in warfare he shaves his head on his return home, and his friends rub a medicine, which generally consists of goat's dung, over his body to prevent the spirit of the slain man from troubling him.[1] With the Ja-Luo of Kavirondo the custom is somewhat different. Three days after his return from the fight the warrior shaves his head. But before he may enter his village he has to hang a live fowl, head uppermost, round his neck; then the bird is decapitated and its head left hanging on his body. Soon after his return a feast is made for the slain man, in order that his ghost may not haunt his slayer.[2] In Fiji any one who had clubbed a human being to death in war was consecrated or tabooed. He was smeared red by the king with turmeric from the roots of his hair to his heels. A hut was built and in it he had to pass the next three nights, during which he might not lie down, but must sleep as he sat. Till the three nights had elapsed he might not change his garment, nor remove the turmeric, nor enter a house in which there was a woman.[3] That these rules were intended to protect the Fijian warrior from his victim's ghost is strongly suggested, if not proved, by another Fijian custom. When these savages had buried a man alive, as they often did, they used at nightfall to make a great uproar by means of bamboos, trumpet-shells, and so forth, for the purpose of frightening away his ghost, lest he should attempt to return to his old home. And to render his house unattractive to him they dismantled it and clothed it with everything that to their ideas seemed most repulsive.[4] So the North American Indians used to run through the village with hideous yells, beating on the furniture, walls, and roofs of the huts to drive away the angry ghost of an enemy whom they had just tortured to death.[5] A similar custom is still observed in various parts of New Guinea.[6]

[1] Sir H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate* (London, 1902), ii. 743 sq.; C. W. Hobley, *Eastern Uganda* (London, 1902), p. 20.

[2] Sir H. Johnston, *op. cit.*, ii. 794; C. W. Hobley, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[3] T. Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*[2], i. 55 sq.

[4] J. E. Erskine, *The Western Pacific*, p. 477.

[5] Charlevoix, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, vi. 77, 122 sq.; J. F. Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages Ameriquains*, ii. 279.

[6] R. E. Guise, in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxviii (1899), pp. 213 sq.; J. L. D. van der Roest, in *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, xl (1898), pp. 157 sq.; H. von Rosenberg, *Der malayische Archipel*, p. 461; K. Vetter in *Nachrichten über Kaiser Wilhelms-Land und den Bismarck-Archipel*, 1897, p. 94.

Thus the mark of Cain may have been a mode of disguising a homicide or of rendering him so repulsive or formidable in appearance that his victim's ghosts would either not know him or at least give him a wide berth. Elsewhere I have conjectured that mourning costume in general was originally a disguise adopted to protect the surviving relatives from the dreaded ghost of the recently departed.[1] Whether that be so or not, it is certain that the living do sometimes disguise themselves to escape the notice of the dead. Thus in the western districts of Timor, a large island of the Indian Archipelago, before the body of a man is coffined, his wives stand weeping over him, and their village gossips must also be present 'all with loosened hair in order to make themselves unrecognizable by the *nitu* (spirit) of the dead.'[2] Again, among the Herero of South Africa, when a man is dying he will sometimes say to a person whom he does not like, 'Whence do you come? I do not wish to see you here,' and so saying he presses the fingers of his left hand together in such a way that the tip of the thumb protrudes between the fingers. 'The person spoken to now knows that the other has decided upon taking him away (*okutuaerera*) after his death, which means that he must die. In many cases, however, he can avoid this threatening danger of death. For this purpose, he hastily leaves the place of the dying man and looks for an *onganga* (i. e. "doctor, magician"), in order to have himself undressed, washed, and greased again, and dressed with other clothes. He is now quite at ease about the threatening of death caused by the deceased; for, says he, "Now our father does not know me."'[3] In like manner we may suppose that when Cain had been marked by God he felt quite easy in his mind, believing that the ghost of his murdered brother would no longer recognize and molest him.

§ 2. *Sacred oaks and terebinths.*

Among the sacred trees of the ancient Hebrews the oak and the terebinth seem to have held a foremost place. Both trees are still common in Palestine. Thus, for example, speaking of the Plain

[1] *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xv (1886), p. 73.

[2] J. G. F. Riedel, 'Die Landschaft Dawan oder West-Timor,' *Deutsche Geographische Blätter*, x. 286.

[3] The Rev. G. Viehe, 'Some customs of the Ovaherero,' (*South African*) *Folk-lore Journal*, i (1879), pp. 51 sq.

of Sharon which is interposed between the inhospitable sandy shore of the Mediterranean and the hills of Samaria, Thomson says: 'The sandy downs, with their pine bushes, are falling back towards the sea, giving place to a firmer soil, upon which stand here and there venerable oak trees, like patriarchs of by-gone generations left alone in the wilderness. They are the beginning of the largest and most impressive oak forest in western Palestine. It extends northwards to the eastern base of Carmel, and, with slight interruptions, it continues along the western slopes of Galilee quite to the lofty Jermûk, west of Safet. I have spent many days in wandering through those vast oak glades. The scenery is becoming quite park-like and very pretty. The trees are all of one kind, and apparently very old. The Arabic name for this species of oak is *sindián*—a large evergreen tree whose botanical name is *quercus pseudo-coccifera*.[1] There are other varieties of the oak interspersed occasionally with these, but the prevailing tree everywhere is the noble, venerable, and solemn *sindián*. . . . On one occasion I spent a night, for the sake of protection, at a village a few miles north-east of these mills called Sindiáneh—the name no doubt derived from the oak woods which surround it. I had a delightful ramble early the next morning in those grand old forests, and then understood perfectly how Absalom could be caught by the thick branches of an oak. The strong arms of these trees spread out so near the ground that one cannot walk erect beneath them; and on a frightened mule such a head of hair as that vain but wicked son polled every year would certainly become inextricably entangled.'[2] In antiquity these woods of Sharon were known as the Forest or the Oak Forest, and they are the Enchanted Forest of Tasso.[3] Again, in speaking of the Wady 'Abilîn on the confines of Zebulun and Asher, Thomson says: 'It is conducting us through a grand avenue of magnificent oaks, whose grateful shade is refreshing to the weary

[1] Amongst the many species of oaks found in Palestine 'this variety is the most common, and sometimes attains a magnificent growth, as the oak of Libbeya in Galilee' (H. B. Tristram, *The Fauna and Flora of Palestine*, p. 412). Compare *id.*, *The Natural History of the* Bible[9], pp. 368 sq. As to the oak of Libbeya, see below, p. 112.

[2] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Southern Palestine and Jerusalem* (London, 1881), pp. 60 sq.; compare p. 79.

[3] G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London, 1894), pp. 147 sq.

traveller. They are part of an extensive forest which covers most of the hills southward to the plain of Esdraelon. There is hardly a more agreeable ride in the country than through this noble oak wood from Shefa 'Omar to Seffûrieh. Many of the trees are very large, and by their great age indicate that this region was not cultivated.'[1] Again, the romantic scenery of Banias, where the Jordan bursts full-born from the foot of Mount Hermon, owes much of its charm to forests and clumps of grand oaks.[2] Canon Tristram describes an evergreen oak at the village of Libbeya in this neighbourhood as the most magnificent tree he ever remembered to have seen. At a little distance he and his friends could hardly believe that it was a single tree.[3]

Passing now to the east of the Jordan we are told of Ard el Bathanyeh, the ancient Batanea, that 'the whole of the province is exceedingly picturesque. The mountains are well wooded with forests of evergreen oaks, and the sides terraced.'[4] Again, speaking of the Decapolis, Thomson writes: 'We have been following along the remains of a Roman road, and now we are entering a beautiful forest of evergreen oaks which seems to extend a great distance over the range of Jebel Haurân. Kûnawât itself is surrounded by it, and many of the ruins are embowered beneath wide-spreading *sindiân* trees, as these scrub-oaks are called by the natives, and here and there some of the columns are seen rising above the dense foliage'[5]; and further on he writes: 'The country between our line of travel and the valley of the Jordan northward and westward is wild and mountainous, and in some parts it is well wooded with noble oak forests. It is the region of the ancient

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 302. As to this oak-forest see further H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], pp. 112, 116, 121. However, since Thomson wrote, the destruction of the forests of western Palestine would seem to have proceeded apace. See H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*[7], p. 7.

[2] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 440, 464, 467, 469, 470, 473, 481, 484, 485, 494; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], pp. 572, 573, 577, 578.

[3] H. B. Tristram, *op. cit.*, pp. 594 sq. The lower trunk of the tree measured thirty-seven feet in circumference at the narrowest part.

[4] Dr. Porter, quoted by W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 441.

[5] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, p. 481; compare pp. 494, 497.

Decapolis.'[1] 'In Gilead, we come to a more densely-wooded region, a true forest in places, the tops of the higher ranges covered with noble pines; then a zone of evergreen oaks, with arbutus, myrtle, and other shrubs intermixed; lower down the deciduous oak is the predominant tree.'[2] Of these beautiful woods of Gilead, where the famous balm was obtained, Thomson says: 'We have now reached the regular road from el Husn to Sûf and Jerash, and will have the shade of this noble forest of oak, pine, and other trees for the rest of the ride. There is not a breath of air in these thick woods, and the heat is most oppressive both to ourselves and our weary animals. . . . Up to this point—an hour and a half from el Husn—much of the country is cultivated, but from this on to Sûf the forest is uninterrupted, and is composed mostly of evergreen oaks, interspersed occasionally with pines, terebinths, and hawthorn. . . . From Um el Khanzîr to Sûf is nearly two hours, and in spring nothing can be more delightful than a ride through these forests, the grandest in this land of Gilead; and we need not wonder at the encomiums lavished by all travellers that have passed this way on the beautiful woodland scenery of these regions, for even the most enthusiastic have not said enough in its praise.'[3] 'After leaving the olive groves of Sûf we shall be overshadowed by an uninterrupted forest of venerable oak and other evergreen trees for more than an hour to 'Ain-Jenneh. . . . These forests extend a great distance to the north and south, and a large part of the country might be brought under cultivation by clearing away the trees. The substratum is everywhere limestone, the soil is naturally fertile, and in the spring of the year the surface is clothed with luxuriant pasture. "Jebel Ajlun", says Dr. Eli Smith, "presents the most charming rural scenery that I have seen in Syria; a continued forest of noble trees, chiefly the evergreen oak, *sindiân*, covers a large part of it, while the ground beneath is clothed with luxuriant grass, a foot or more in height, and decked with a rich variety of wild flowers."'[4] Speaking of this district Canon Tristram says: 'Our second hour was through real forest, by winding paths and under spreading oaks, where many a turban

[1] W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 546.

[2] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*[9], p. 8.

[3] W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 555. As to the oak-woods of Gilead, see also J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land* (London, 1822), p. 348.

[4] W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 574 sq., compare p. 582.

was knocked off, or mule's burden dislodged.'[1] 'Immediately beyond Khirbet Sâr we began to descend into Wady es Seir by a very steep path, through a magnificent forest of large oak-trees. That valley is very beautiful, and the mountains rise higher and higher on either side, covered to their summits with thick groves of evergreen oaks, terebinths, and other trees.'[2] Not far off, in a rocky amphitheatre commanding a wide prospect westward, and backed on all other sides by wooded hills and jagged limestone crags, are the ruins of the castle which Hyrcanus, one of the Maccabean princes, built for himself, and adorned with spacious gardens, when he retired in dudgeon to live in rural solitude far from the intrigues and tumults of Jerusalem. He was a wise man to choose so fair a spot for his retirement from the world. The neighbouring glen, the cliffs, the hill-sides wooded with oaks and terebinths, and the green undulating slopes below make up a lovely landscape, especially in spring when the oleanders convert the bed of the purling stream into a sheet of rosy bloom.[3]

The oaks which thus abound in many parts of Palestine are still regarded with superstitious veneration by the peasantry. Thus, speaking of a fine oak grove near the Lake of Phiala in northern Palestine, Thomson says: 'These oaks under which we now sit are believed to be inhabited by Jân and other spirits. Almost every village in these wadys and on those mountains has one or more of such thick oaks, which are sacred from the same superstition. Many of them in this region are believed to be inhabited by certain spirits, called *Benât Ya'kôb*—daughters of Jacob—a strange and obscure notion, in regard to which I could never obtain an intelligible explanation. It seems to be a relic of ancient idolatry, which the stringent laws of Muhammed banished in form, but could not entirely eradicate from the minds of the multitude. Indeed, the Moslems are as stupidly given to such superstitions as any class of the community. Connected with this notion, no doubt, is the custom of burying their holy men and so-called prophets under those trees, and erecting *muzârs* [domed shrines] to them there. All non-Christian sects believe that the spirits of these saints love to return to this world, and especially to visit the

[1] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], p. 555.

[2] W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 594.

[3] W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 596; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], pp. 517 sqq. As to Hyrcanus and his castle see Josephus, *Antiquit. Jud.* xii. 4. 11.

place of their tombs. . . . I have witnessed some ludicrous displays of daring enacted about such old trees by native Protestants just emancipated from this superstition; and I can point to many people who have been all their lives long, and are still, held in bondage through fear of those imaginary spirits.

'Scarcely any tree figures more largely in biblical narrative and poetry than the oak; but I observe that certain modern critics contend that it is, after all, not the oak, but the terebinth. The criticism is not quite so sweeping as that. It is merely attempted to prove, I believe, that the Hebrew word *elâh*, which in our version is generally rendered oak, should be translated terebinth. *Allon*, they say, is the true name of the oak. The Hebrew writers seem to use these names indiscriminately for the same tree or for different varieties of it, and that tree was the oak. For example, the tree in which Absalom was caught by the hair is called *elâh*, not the *allon*; and yet I am persuaded it was an oak. The battlefield on that occasion was on the mountains east of the Jordan, always celebrated for great oaks. I see it asserted by the advocates of this rendering that the oak is not a common or very striking tree in this country, implying that the terebinth is. A greater mistake could scarcely be made. Besides the oak groves north of Tabor, and in Gilead, Bashan, Hermon, and Lebanon, there are the forests, extending thirty miles at least along the hills west of Nazareth to Carmel on the north, and from there southward beyond Caesarea Palestina. To maintain, therefore, that the oak is not a striking or abundant tree in Palestine is a piece of critical hardihood tough as the tree itself.'[1]

At the romantic village of Bludan, a favourite retreat of the people of Damascus in the heat of summer, there are 'remains of an old temple of Baal; and the grove of aged oaks on the slope beneath it is still a place held in superstitious veneration by the villagers'.[2] 'In the *W. Barado*, near Damascus, where certain heathenish festival customs do yet remain amongst the Moslemin, I have visited two groves of evergreen oaks, which are *wishing-places* for the peasantry. If anything fall to them for which they vowed, they will go to the one on a certain day in the year to break a crock there; or they lay up a new stean in a little cave which is under a rock at the other. There I have looked in, and saw it full to the

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 474–6.

[2] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], p. 164.

entry of their yet whole offering-pots: in that other grove you will see the heap of their broken potsherds.'[1] Another sacred grove of oaks is at Beinu in northern Syria. A ruined Greek church stands among the trees.[2] Again, we are told that 'in a Turkish village in northern Syria there is a large and very old oak-tree, which is regarded as sacred. People burn incense to it, and bring their offerings to it, precisely in the same way as to some shrine. There is no tomb of any saint in its neighbourhood, but the people worship the tree itself'.[3]

Very often these venerated oaks are found growing singly or in groves beside one of those white-domed tombs or supposed shrines of Mohammedan saints, which may be seen from one end of Syria to the other. Many such white domes and green groves crown the tops of hills. 'Yet no one knows when, by whom, or for what special reason they first became consecrated shrines. Many of them are dedicated to the patriarchs and prophets, a few to Jesus and the apostles; some bear the name of traditionary heroes, and others appear to honour persons, places, and incidents of merely local interest. Many of these "high places" have probably come down from remote ages, through all the mutations of dynasties and religions, unchanged to the present day. We can believe this the more readily because some of them are now frequented by the oldest communities in the country, and those most opposed to each other—Arabs of the desert, Muhammedans, Metawîleh, Druses, Christians, and even Jews. We may have, therefore, in those "high places under every green tree upon the high mountains and upon the hills", not only sites of the very highest antiquity, but existing monuments, with their groves and domes, of man's ancient superstitions; and if that does not add to our veneration, it will greatly increase the interest with which we examine them. There is one of these "high places", with its groves of venerable oak-trees, on the summit of Lebanon, east of this village of Jezzin. The top of the mountain is of an oval shape, and the grove was planted regularly around it.'[4]

In like manner Captain Conder, speaking of the real, not the nominal, religion of the Syrian peasantry at the present day, writes

[1] C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (Cambridge, 1888), i. 450.

[2] S. I. Curtiss, *Primitive Semitic Religion To-day* (Chicago, 1902), pp. 138 sq.

[3] S. I. Curtiss, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

[4] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, pp. 169–171.

as follows: 'The professed religion of the country is Islam, the simple creed of "one God, and one messenger of God"; yet you may live for months in the out-of-the-way parts of Palestine without seeing a mosque, or hearing the call of the Muedhen to prayer. Still the people are not without a religion which shapes every action of their daily life. . . . In almost every village in the country a small building, surmounted by a white-washed dome, is observable, being the sacred chapel of the place; it is variously called *Kubbeh*, "dome"; *Mazar*, "shrine"; or *Mukâm*, "station"; the latter being a Hebrew word used in the Bible for the "places" [*mĕḳomoth*] of the Canaanites, which Israel was commanded to destroy "upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree" (Deut. xii. 2). Just as in the time of Moses, so now, the position chosen for the *Mukâm* is generally conspicuous. On the top of a peak, or on the back of a ridge, the little white dome gleams brightly in the sun; under the boughs of the spreading oak or terebinth, beside the solitary palm, or among the aged lotus-trees at a spring, one lights constantly on the low building, standing isolated or surrounded by the shallow graves of a small cemetery. The trees beside the *Mukâms* are always considered sacred, and every bough which falls is treasured within the sacred building.' 'This *Mukâm* represents the real religion of the peasant. . . . It is the sacred place from which the influence of the saint is supposed to radiate, extending in the case of a powerful Sheikh to a distance of perhaps twenty miles all round. If propitious, the Sheikh bestows good luck, health, and general blessings on his worshippers; if enraged, he will inflict palpable blows, distraction of mind, or even death. . . . When sickness prevails in a village, votive offerings are brought to the *Mukâm*, and I have often seen a little earthenware lamp brought down by some poor wife or mother, whose husband or child was sick. A vow to the saint is paid by a sacrifice called *Kôd*, or "requital", a sheep being killed close to the *Mukâm* and eaten at a feast in honour of the beneficent Sheikh.'[1] Thus the worship at the high places and green trees which pious Hebrew kings forbade and prophets thundered against thousands of years ago persists in the same places to this day. So little is an ignorant peasantry affected by the passing of empires, by the moral and spiritual revolutions which change the face of the civilized world.

To take, now, some particular examples of these local sanctuaries.

[1] C. R. Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, ii. 218–221.

On a ridge near the lake of Phiala in northern Palestine, there is 'a knoll covered with a copse of noble oak trees forming a truly venerable grove, with a deep religious gloom'. In the midst of the grove stands the *wely* or shrine of Sheikh 'Othman Hâzûry; it is merely a common Moslem tomb surrounded by a shabby stone wall. Just below, on one side of the knoll, is a small fountain which takes its name from the saint.[1] Again, on the summit of Jebel Osh'a, the highest mountain of Gilead, may be seen the reputed tomb of the prophet Hosea shaded by a magnificent evergreen oak. The tomb is venerated alike by Moslems, Christians, and Jews. People used to come on pilgrimage to the spot to sacrifice, pray, and feast. The prospect from the summit is esteemed the finest in all Palestine, surpassing in beauty, though not in range, the more famous view from Mount Nebo, whence Moses just before death gazed on the Promised Land, which he was not to enter, lying spread out in purple lights and shadows across the deep valley of the Jordan.[2] Again, the reputed tomb of Abel, high up a cliff beside the river Abana in the Lebanon, is surrounded by venerable oak-trees. It is a domed structure of the usual sort, and is a place of Mohammedan pilgrimage.[3] At Tibneh a rock-hewn tomb is traditionally said to be the grave of Joshua, and beside it grows a remarkable oak, which Captain Conder describes as 'perhaps the oldest and finest tree in Palestine'.[4] Again, at Tell el Kady, 'the hill of the judge,' at the source of the Jordan, a Moslem tomb is shaded by two fine trees, a holm oak and a terebinth standing side by side. Their branches are hung with rags and other rubbish, the votive offerings of pious people.[5]

Even when the hallowed oaks do not grow beside the tombs or shrines of saints they are often thus decorated with rags by

[1] Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine*[3], iii. 401; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 473.

[2] J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Syria and the Holy Land* (London, 1822), pp. 353 sq.; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], p. 546; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, pp. 585 sq. For the view from Mount Nebo, see H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], pp. 524–7; *id.*, *The Land of Moab*, pp. 325 sq.

[3] W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 350.

[4] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Southern Palestine and Jerusalem*, pp. 121 sq.

[5] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], pp. 572 sq.; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 459 (who does not mention the species of the trees). Baedeker speaks only of an oak (*Palestine and Syria*[4], p. 259).

the superstitious peasantry. Thus at Seilûn, the site of the ancient Shiloh, 'is a large and noble oak-tree called Balûtat-Ibrahîm, Abraham's oak. It is one of the "inhabited trees" so common in this country, and the superstitious peasants hang bits of rags on the branches to propitiate the mysterious beings that are supposed to "inhabit" it.'[1] 'Some distance back we passed a cluster of large oak-trees, and the lower branches of one of them were hung with bits of rag of every variety of shape and colour. What is the meaning of this ornamentation? That was one of the haunted or 'inhabited trees', supposed to be the abode of evil spirits; and those bits of rag are suspended upon the branches to protect the wayfarer from their malign influence. There are many such trees in all parts of the country, and the superstitious inhabitants are afraid to sleep under them.'[2] One of these haunted trees may be seen on the site of Old Beyrout. It is a venerable evergreen oak growing near the edge of a precipice. The people hang strips of their garments on its boughs, believing that it has the power to cure sickness. One of its roots forms an arch above ground, and through this arch persons who suffer from rheumatism and lumbago crawl to be healed of their infirmities. Expectant mothers also creep through it to obtain an easy delivery. On the 21st of September men and women dance and sing all night beside the tree, the sexes dancing separately. This oak is so sacred that when a shallow sceptic dared to cut a branch of it his arm withered up.[3]

[1] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 104. Of this custom, as practised in Syria, the late Prof. S. I. Curtiss writes: 'There are many trees, apart from shrines, which are believed to be possessed by spirits, to whom vows and sacrifices are made. Such trees are often hung with rags or bits of cloth. It is not easy to determine the significance of the rags. Some say they are intended to be a constant reminder to the saint of the petition of the worshipper, like a string tied around the finger; others that the rag taken from the ailing body of the suppliant, and tied to one of the branches, is designed to transfer the illness of the person represented by the rags to the saint, who thus takes it away from the sufferers and bears it vicariously himself. Sometimes the man who is ill takes a rag from the tree, as one tears off a bit of the pall from the cenotaph of the shrine, and carries it about on his person, and so enjoys the advantage of virtue from the saint' (*Primitive Semitic Religion To-day*, p. 91). The custom of hanging rags on sacred trees is observed in many lands, though the motives for doing so are by no means always clear. See E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus*, ii. 175 sqq.

[2] W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 171 sq.

[3] F. Sessions, 'Some Syrian folklore notes gathered on Mount Lebanon,' *Folk-lore*, ix (1898), pp. 915 sq.; W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

In various parts of the upper valley of the Jordan there are groves of oaks and shrines dedicated to the daughters of Jacob. One of these shrines may be seen at the town of Safed. It is a small mosque containing a tomb in which the damsels are supposed to live in all the bloom of beauty. Incense is burnt at the door of the tomb. A gallant and now highly distinguished officer, engaged in the Survey of Palestine, searched the tomb carefully for the ladies, but without success.[1] The association of the daughters of Jacob with oak-trees seems to point to a belief in Dryads or nymphs of the oak.

In Hebrew the words commonly rendered 'oak' and 'terebinth' are very similar, the difference between them being in part merely a difference in the vowel points which were added to the text by the Massoretic scribes in the Middle Ages. Scholars are not agreed as to the correct equivalents of the words, so that when we meet with one or other of them in the Old Testament it is to some extent doubtful whether the tree referred to is an oak or a terebinth.[2] The terebinth (*Pistacia Terebinthus*) is still a common tree in Palestine, occurring either singly or in clumps mingled with forests of oak. The natives call it the *butm* tree. It 'is not an evergreen, as is often represented; but its small feathered lancet-shaped leaves fall in the autumn and are renewed in the spring. The flowers are small and followed by small oval berries, hanging in clusters from two to five inches long, resembling much the clusters of the vine when the grapes are just set. From incisions in the trunk there is said to flow a sort of transparent balsam,

[1] W. M. Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 222, 445 sq. See also above, p. 114.

[2] 'There are five similar Heb. words—*'el* [only in the pl. *'elīm*], *'ēlāh*, *'ēlōn*, *'āllāh* (only Jos. xxiv. 26), and *'allon*—the difference between which depends in part only upon the punctuation, and the special sense of each of which is not perfectly certain: Gesenius, after a careful survey of the data, arrived at the conclusion, which has been largely accepted by subsequent scholars, that *'ēl*, *'ēlāh*, *'elon* denoted properly the *terebinth*, and *'allāh*, *'allōn* the *oak*' (S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*[9], p. 147). See further *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, s.v. 'Terebinth'. In regard to the words in question Professor G. F. Moore maintains that 'there is no real foundation for the discrimination; the words signify in Aramaic "tree" simply; in Hebrew usually, if not exclusively, "holy tree," as the place, and primitively the object, of worship, without regard to the species' (*Commentary on Judges*[2], pp. 121 sq.). Canon Tristram held that *'ēlāh* denoted the terebinth, but that all the other words in question applied to acorn-bearing oaks. According to him, *'allon* probably stands for the evergreen oak, and *'elon* for the deciduous sorts (*The Natural History of the Bible*[9], p. 367).

constituting a very pure and fine species of turpentine, with an agreeable odour like citron or jessamine and a mild taste, and hardening gradually into a transparent gum. In Palestine nothing seems to be known of this product of the Butm.'[1] The terebinth 'is a very common tree in the southern and eastern parts of the country, being generally found in situations too warm or dry for the oak, whose place it there supplies, and which it much resembles in general appearance at a distance. It is seldom seen in clumps or groves, never in forests, but stands isolated and weird-like in some bare ravine or on a hill-side, where nothing else towers above the low brushwood. When it sheds its leaves at the beginning of winter, it still more recalls the familiar English oak, with its short and gnarled trunk, spreading and irregular limbs, and small twigs . . . Towards the north this tree becomes more scarce, but in the ancient Moab and Ammon, and in the region round Heshbon, it is the only one which relieves the monotony of the rolling downs and boundless sheepwalks.'[2] Fine specimens of the tree may be seen standing solitary in various places, for example one in the Wady es Sunt on the way from Hebron to Ramleh, another at the north-west corner of the walls of Jerusalem, another on the supposed site of the city of Adullam, and another at Shiloh.[3] And beautiful forests of mingled terebinths and oaks clothe some of the glens of the Lebanon, the hills of Naphtali and Galilee, and form a great part of the rich woodlands on the eastern side of the Jordan.[4]

Yet if we may judge from the comparative frequence of allusions to the two trees in the descriptions of travellers, the terebinth

[1] Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine*[3], ii. 222 sq. Compare W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 19 sq., who also says that the resin is not extracted from the tree by the natives of Palestine.

[2] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*[9], pp. 400, 401.

[3] E. Robinson, *loc. cit.*; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Southern Palestine and Jerusalem*, p. 229; *id. Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 19 sq., 49 sq., 478; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], p. 159.

[4] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, pp. 224, 257, 324, 551, 558, 559; *id. Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, pp. 282, 295, 502, 555, 578, 594, 596, 604 sq. See above, pp. 113, 114. On the road from Heshbon to Rabbath Ammon 'we rode up a narrow glen, rocky and rough, with fine terebinth-trees, the largest we saw in Palestine, stretching their gnarled and twisted boughs over the path' (H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], p. 531).

is less common in Palestine than the oak[1], and is far less often the object of superstitious regard. Canon Tristram indeed tells us that 'many terebinths remain to this day objects of veneration in their neighbourhood; and the favourite burying-place of the Bedouin sheikh is under a solitary tree. Eastern travellers will recall the "Mother of rags" on the outskirt of the desert—a terebinth covered with the votive offerings of superstition or affection'[2]; and elsewhere the same writer mentions a terebinth hung with rags at the source of the Jordan.[3] Again, Captain Conder writes that 'among the peculiar religious institutions of the country are the sacred trees, which are generally oaks, or terebinths, with names taken from some Sheikh to whom they belong. They are covered all over with rags tied to the branches, which are considered acceptable offerings.'[4] But apart from these few notices (which, however, might doubtless be multiplied by further search), I have found no evidence of a superstitious regard paid to the terebinth by Syrian peasants in modern times. The rarity of such notices compared with the abundant references to the sanctity of the oak seems to show that in Syria at the present day the oak is more commonly revered by the people than the terebinth; and when we consider the tenacity and persistence of identical forms of superstition through the ages we seem justified in concluding that in antiquity also the oak was more generally worshipped than the terebinth by the idolatrous inhabitants of the land. From this it follows that when a doubt exists as to whether in the Old Testament the Hebrew word for a sacred tree should be rendered 'oak' or 'terebinth' the preference ought to be given to the rendering 'oak'. This conclusion is confirmed by the general practice of the old Greek translators and of St. Jerome, who, in translating these passages, commonly render the doubtful word by 'oak' and not by 'terebinth'.[5] On the whole, then, the Revisers

[1] Compare the number of the references to oaks and terebinths respectively in the indices to W. M. Thomson's *The Land and the Book* (the edition in three volumes). From that work I have adduced only part of the evidence for the prevalence of the oak, but most of the evidence for the prevalence of the terebinth. No modern writer, probably, has known Syria and Palestine so well as Thomson, who spent forty-five years of his life in the country.

[2] H. B. Tristram, *The Natural History of the Bible*[9], p. 401.

[3] See above, p. 118.

[4] C. R. Conder, *Tent Work in Palestine*, ii. 233.

[5] So far as I see, there are some eighteen to twenty passages in the Old

of our English Bible have done well to translate all the words in question by 'oak' instead of by 'terebinth', except in the two passages where two of these words occur in the same verse. In these two passages[1] the Revisers render *'allon* by 'oak' but *'ēlāh* by 'terebinth'. Elsewhere they render *'ēlāh* by 'oak', but in the margin they mention 'terebinth' as an alternative rendering. I shall follow their example and cite the Revised Version in the sequel.

That the idolatrous Hebrews of antiquity revered the oak-tree is proved by the evidence of the prophets who denounced the superstition. Thus Hosea says: 'They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters commit whoredom, and your brides commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your brides when they commit adultery; for they themselves go apart with whores, and they sacrifice with the harlots.'[2] The prophet here refers to a custom of religious prostitution which was carried on under the shadow of the sacred trees. Referring to the sacred groves of his heathenish countrymen, Ezekiel says: 'And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when their

Testament where a reference is made to an oak or a terebinth, which, from the context, may be thought to have been sacred. In thirteen of these passages the Septuagint renders the doubtful word by 'oak' (δρῦς or *βάλανος*), and in five by 'terebinth'; in the other passages the rendering is neutral. In eleven out of the eighteen to twenty passages St. Jerome, in his Latin version (the Vulgate), renders the doubtful word by 'oak' (*quercus*), and in four by 'terebinth'; in the other passages the rendering is neutral. The passages in question are Genesis xii. 6, xiii. 18, xiv. 13, xviii. 1, xxxv. 4 and 8; Deuteronomy xi. 30; Joshua xxiv. 26; Judges vi. 11 and 19, ix. 6 and 37; 1 Samuel x. 3; 1 Kings xiii. 14; 1 Chronicles x. 12; Isaiah i. 29, lvii. 5; Jeremiah ii. 34 (where the Hebrew text should be corrected by the Septuagint and the Peshitto; see below, p. 124, note 4); Ezekiel vi. 13; Hosea iv. 13. In a number of these passages the English Authorized Version is quite incorrect, rendering the doubtful word neither by 'oak' nor 'terebinth'. The English reader should consult the Revised Version. In two passages (Isaiah vi. 13; Hosea iv. 13) two of the doubtful words (*'elah* and *'allon*) occur in the same verse. In the former passage the Septuagint renders *'ēlāh* by 'terebinth' and *'allōn* by 'oak' (*βάλανος*); in the latter passage it renders *'allon* by 'oak' and *'elah* by 'shady tree'. In both passages the Vulgate renders *'elah* by 'terebinth' and *'allon* by 'oak'. My ignorance of Syriac prevents me from comparing the renderings of the Peshitto. I have to thank Professor F. C. Burkitt for kindly communicating to me the rendering of the Peshitto in Jeremiah ii. 34.

[1] Isaiah vi. 13; Hosea iv. 13. See the preceding note.

[2] Hosea iv. 13 sq.

slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols.'[1] Again, Isaiah, speaking of the sinners who forsake the Lord, says: 'For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.'[2] Again, the author of the later prophecy which passes under the name of Isaiah, in denouncing the idolatry of his day, says: 'Ye that inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every green tree; that slay the children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks.'[3] The slaughter here referred to is no doubt the sacrifice of children to Moloch. Jeremiah alludes to the same practice in a passionate address to sinful Israel: 'Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the innocent poor: I have not found it at the place of breaking in, but upon every oak.'[4] Thus it would seem that the blood of the sacrificed children was smeared on, or at least offered in some form to, the sacred oaks. In this connexion it should be remembered that the victims were slaughtered before being burned in the fire[5], so that it would be possible to use their blood as an unguent or a libation. The Gallas of East Africa pour the blood of animals at the foot of their sacred trees in order to prevent them from withering, and sometimes they

[1] Ezekiel vi. 13. For 'oak' the Revised Version has 'terebinth' in the margin.

[2] Isaiah i. 29. For 'oaks' the Revised Version has 'terebinths' in the margin.

[3] Isaiah lvii. 5. For 'among the oaks' the Revised Version has 'with idols' in the margin. But the former rendering (or 'among the terebinths') is to be preferred. See Professor J. Skinner in his note on the passage (*Isaiah xl–lxvi*, p. 155, in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*).

[4] Jeremiah ii. 34, where the meaningless אֵלֶּה ('these') of the Massoretic text should be corrected into אֵלָה or אַלָה ('oak' or 'terebinth') in accordance with the readings of the Septuagint (*ἐπὶ πάσῃ δρυΐ*), and of the Syriac Version. The change is merely one of punctuation; the original Hebrew text remains unaffected. The vague sense of the preposition עַל leaves it uncertain whether the blood was smeared on the trees or poured out at their foot. However, Professor Kennett writes to me that he believes the textual corruption in Jeremiah ii. 34 to be too deep to be healed by the slight emendation I have adopted. He conjectures that the last clause of the verse is defective through the omission of a word or words.

[5] Genesis xxii; Ezekiel xvi. 20 sq., xxiii. 39; G. F. Moore, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, iii. 3184 sq.

smear the trunks and boughs with blood, butter, and milk.[1] In like manner the old Prussians sprinkled the blood of their sacrifices on the holy oak at Romove [2], and Lucan says that in the sacred Druidical grove at Marseilles every tree was washed with human blood.[3]

But if in the later times of Israel the worship of the oak or the terebinth was denounced by the prophets as a heathenish rite, there is a good deal of evidence to show that at an earlier period sacred oaks or terebinths played an important part in the popular religion, and that Jehovah himself was closely associated with them. At all events it is remarkable how often God or his angel is said to have revealed himself to one of the old patriarchs or heroes at an oak or a terebinth. Thus the first recorded appearance of Jehovah to Abraham took place at the oracular oak or terebinth of Shechem, and there Abraham built him an altar.[4] Again, we are told that Abraham dwelt beside the oaks or terebinths of Mamre at Hebron, and that he built there also an altar to the Lord.[5] And it was there, beside the oaks or terebinths of Mamre, as he sat in his tent in the heat of the day, that God appeared to him in the likeness of three men, and there under the shadow of the trees the Deity partook of the flesh, the milk, and the curds which the hospitable patriarch offered him.[6] So too the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak or terebinth of Ophrah, and Gideon, who was busy threshing the wheat, brought him the flesh and broth of a kid and unleavened cakes to eat under the oak. But the angel, instead of eating the food, bade Gideon lay the flesh and cakes on a rock and pour out the broth; then with a touch of his staff he drew fire from the rock, and the flame consumed the flesh and the cakes. After that the heavenly, or perhaps the arboreal,

[1] Ph. Paulitschke, *Ethnographie Nordost-Afrikas, die geistige Cultur der Danâkil, Galla und Somâl* (Berlin, 1896), pp. 34 sq.; *id.*, *Ethnographie Nordost-Afrikas, die materielle Cultur der Danâkil, Galla und Somâl* (Berlin, 1893), p. 152. Compare O. Baumann, *Usambara und seine Nachbargebiete* (Berlin, 1891), p. 142.

[2] Hartknoch, *Alt und Neues Preussen* (Frankfort and Leipsic, 1684), p. 159.

[3] Lucan, *Pharsalia*, iii. 405.

[4] Genesis xii. 6–9. The 'oak of Moreh' (Revised Version, 'terebinth' margin) is the 'directing oak' or 'oak of the director'; where the reference is to oracular direction given either by the tree itself or by the priests who served it. Oracular oaks or terebinths (oaks or terebinths of Moreh) are mentioned also in this neighbourhood by the author of Deuteronomy (xi. 30). See Professor S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*[4], pp. 146 sq.; *id.*, *Commentary on Deuteronomy*[3], p. 134.

[5] Genesis xiii. 18, xiv. 13.

[6] Genesis xviii. 1–8, with Professor Driver's note on verse 8.

visitant vanished, and Gideon, like Abraham, built an altar on the spot.[1]

There was an oracular oak or terebinth near Shechem as well as at Mamre[2]; whether it was the same tree under which God appeared to Abraham, we do not know. Its name, 'the oak or terebinth of the augurs', seems to show that a set of wizards or Druids, if we may call them so, had their station at the sacred tree in order to interpret to inquirers the rustling of the leaves in the wind, the cooing of wood-pigeons in the branches, or such other omens as the spirit of the oak vouchsafed to his worshippers. The beautiful vale of Shechem, embosomed in olives, orange-groves, and palms, and watered by plenteous rills, still presents perhaps the richest landscape in all Palestine[3], and of old it would seem to have been a great seat of tree-worship. At all events in its history we meet again and again with the mention of oaks or terebinths which from the context appear to have been sacred. Thus Jacob took the idols or 'strange gods' of his household, together with the earrings which had probably served as amulets, and buried them under the oak or terebinth at Shechem.[4] According to Eustathius the tree was a terebinth and was worshipped by the people of the neighbourhood down to his own time. An altar stood beside it on which sacrifices were offered.[5] Again, it was under the oak by the sanctuary of the Lord at Shechem that Joshua set up a great stone as a witness, saying to the Israelites, 'Behold this stone shall be a witness against us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness against you, lest ye deny your

[1] Judges vi. 11–24.

[2] Judges ix. 37, 'the oak of Meonenim' (Revised Version), 'the augurs' oak or terebinth' (Revised Version, margin). Compare G. F. Moore, *Commentary on Judges*[2], p. 260. We read of a man of God sitting under an oak (1 Kings xiii. 14); but the tree need not have been oracular.

[3] H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], pp. 135, 147. The modern name of Shechem is Nablous. The town 'has the mulberry, the orange, the pomegranate, and other trees growing amongst the houses, and wreathed and festooned with delicious perfume during the months of April and May. There the bulbul delights to sing, and hundreds of other birds unite to swell the chorus. The people of Nâblus maintain that theirs is the most musical valley in Palestine, nor am I disposed to contradict them' (W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Central Palestine and Phoenicia*, p. 143).

[4] Genesis xxxv. 4, with Professor S. R. Driver's note.

[5] Eustathius, quoted by H. Reland, *Palaestina*, p. 712.

God.'[1] And it was at 'the oak of the pillar' in Shechem that the men of the city made Abimelech king.[2] The oak or terebinth may have been supposed to stand in some close relation to the king; for elsewhere we read of a tree called 'the king's oak' on the borders of the tribe of Asher[3]; and according to one account the bones of Saul and of his sons were buried under the oak or terebinth at Jabesh[4]. So when Rebekah's nurse Deborah died, she was buried below Bethel under the oak, and hence the tree was called the Oak of Weeping.[5] The Oak of Weeping may perhaps have been the very oak at which, according to the directions of Samuel the prophet, Saul shortly before his coronation was to meet three men going up to sacrifice to the Lord at Bethel, who would salute him and give him two of their loaves.[6] This salutation of the future king by the three men at the oak reminds us of the meeting of Abraham with God in the likeness of three men under the oaks of Mamre. In the original story the greeting of the three men at the oak may have had a far deeper meaning than transpires in the form in which the narrative has come down to us. Taken along with the coronation of Abimelech under an oak it suggests that the spirit of the oak, perhaps in triple form, was expected to bless the king at his inauguration. In the light of this suggestion the burial of Saul's bones under an oak seems to acquire a fresh significance. The king, who at the beginning of his reign had been blessed by the god of the oak, was fittingly laid to his last rest under the sacred tree.

But of all the holy trees of ancient Palestine by far the most famous and the most popular was apparently the oak or terebinth of Mamre, where God revealed himself to Abraham, the founder of the Israelitish nation, in the likeness of three men. Was the tree an oak or a terebinth? The ancient testimonies are conflicting, but the balance of evidence is in favour of the terebinth.[7] Josephus tells us that in his day many monuments of Abraham, finely built

[1] Joshua xxiv. 26 sq.

[2] Judges ix. 6 ('terebinth,' Revised Version, margin).

[3] Joshua xix. 26, where Allamelech means 'the king's oak'.

[4] 1 Chronicles x. 12. According to another account (1 Samuel xxxi. 8) the tree under which the royal bones were buried was a tamarisk.

[5] Genesis xxxv. 8.

[6] 1 Samuel x. 3.

[7] The passages of ancient writers which refer to the tree are collected by H. Reland, *Palaestina*, pp. 711–15, and by Valesius in his commentary on Eusebius, *Vit. Constantini*, iii. 53 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, xx. 1113 sqq.).

of beautiful marble, were shown at Hebron, and that six furlongs from the town grew a very large terebinth, which was said to have stood there since the creation of the world.[1] Though he does not expressly say so, we may assume that this terebinth was the one under which Abraham was believed to have entertained the angels. Again, Eusebius affirms that the terebinth remained down to his own time in the early part of the fourth century A.D., and that the spot was still revered as divine by the people of the neighbourhood. A holy picture represented the three mysterious guests who partook of Abraham's hospitality under the tree; the middle of the three figures excelled the rest in honour, and him the good bishop identified with 'Our Lord himself, our Saviour, whom even they who know Him not adore'.[2] All three angels were worshipped by the people of the neighbourhood.[3] They curiously remind us of the three gods whose images were worshipped in the holy oak at Romove, the religious centre of the heathen Prussians.[4] Perhaps both at Hebron and at Romove the tree-god was for some reason conceived in triple form. A pilgrim of Bordeaux, author of the oldest *Itinerary of Jerusalem*, writing in the year 333 A.D., tells us that the terebinth was two miles from Hebron, and that a fine basilica had been built there by order of Constantine. Yet from the manner of his reference to it we gather that 'the terebinth' was in his time merely the name of a place, the tree itself having disappeared.[5] Certainly Jerome, writing later in the same century, seems to imply that the tree no longer existed. For he says that the oak of Abraham or of Mamre was shown down to the reign of Constantine, and that 'the place of the terebinth'

[1] Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* iv. 9. 7.

[2] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, v. 9 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, xxii. 384). In his *Onomasticon* Eusebius, speaking of Hebron, mentions both the oak of Abraham and the terebinth: ἡ δρῦς Ἀβραὰμ, καὶ τὸ μνῆμα αὐτόθι θεωρεῖται, καὶ θρησκεύεται ἐπιφανῶς πρὸς τῶν ἐχθρῶν [*sic*] ἡ θερεβινθος καὶ οἱ τῷ Ἀβραὰμ ἐπιξενωθέντες ἄγγελοι (Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, s. v. Ἀρβώ, pp. 54, 56, ed. F. Larsow and G. Parthey). In this passage we must read πλησιοχώρων, or ἐγχωρίων, or some such word for ἐχθρῶν.

[3] Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, s. v. Ἀρβώ. See the preceding note.

[4] Hartknoch, *Alt und Neues Preussen* (Frankfort and Leipsic, 1684), pp. 116 sq.

[5] 'Itinerarium Burdigalense', in *Itinera Hierosolymitana*, rec. P. Geyer (Vienna, 1898), p. 25: *Inde Terebintho milia viii. Ubi Abraham habitavit et puteum fodit sub arbore terebintho et cum angelis locutus est et cibum sumpsit, ibi basilica facta est jussu Constantini mirae pulchritudinis. Inde terebintho Cebron milia ii.*

was worshipped superstitiously by all the people round about, because Abraham had there entertained the angels.[1]

When Constantine determined to build a church at the sacred tree, he communicated his intention in a letter to Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, who has fortunately preserved a copy of the letter in his life of the emperor. I will extract from it the passage which relates to the holy tree: 'The place which is called "at the Oak of Mamre", where we learn that Abraham had his home, is said to be polluted by certain superstitious persons in various ways; for it is reported that most damnable idols are set up beside it, and that an altar stands hard by, and that unclean sacrifices are constantly offered. Wherefore, seeing that this appears to be foreign to the present age and unworthy of the holiness of the place, I wish your Grace to know that I have written to the right honourable Count Acacius, my friend, commanding that without delay all the idols found at the aforesaid place shall be committed to the flames, and the altar overturned; and any one who after this decree may dare to commit impiety in such a place shall be deemed liable to punishment. We have ordered that the spot shall be adorned with the pure building of a basilica, in order that it may be made a meeting-place worthy of holy men.'[2]

In this letter it will be observed that the emperor speaks of the sacred tree as an oak, not as a terebinth, and it is called an oak also by the Church historians Socrates[3] and Sozomenus[4]. But little weight can be given to their testimony, since all three probably followed the reading of the Septuagint, which calls the tree an oak, not a terebinth.[5] It is probably in deference to the authority of the Septuagint that Eusebius himself speaks of "the oak of Abraham" in the very passage in which he tells us that the terebinth existed to his own time.[6] The Church historian Sozomenus has bequeathed to us a curious and valuable description of the festival

[1] Jerome, *Liber de situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum*, s. v. '*Arboc*' (Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, xxiii. 862). This treatise of Jerome, which is substantially a translation of the *Onomasticon* of Eusebius, was written about 388 A. D. It is printed in the convenient edition of the latter work by Larsow and Parthey.

[2] Eusebius, *Vit. Constantini*, iii. 51–3 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, xx. 1112 sqq.).

[3] Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, i. 18 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, lxvii. 124), who seems to draw his information from Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*.

[4] Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ii. 4 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, lxvii. 941, 944). Yet while he speaks of 'the oak called Mamre', this historian tells us that the place itself was called Terebinth.

[5] Genesis xiii. 18, xiv. 13, xviii. 1.

[6] See above, p. 128, note 2.

which down to the time of Constantine, or even later, was held every summer at the sacred tree. His account runs thus:

'I must now relate the decree which the Emperor Constantine passed with regard to what is called the oak of Mamre. This place, which they now call Terebinth, is fifteen furlongs north of Hebron and about two hundred and fifty furlongs from Jerusalem. It is a true tale that with the angels sent against the people of Sodom the Son of God appeared to Abraham and told him of the birth of his son. There every year a famous festival is still held in summer time by the people of the neighbourhood as well as by the inhabitants of the more distant parts of Palestine and by the Phoenicians and Arabians. Very many also assemble for trade, to buy and sell; for every one sets great store on the festival. The Jews do so because they pride themselves on Abraham as their founder; the Greeks do so on account of the visit of the angels; and the Christians do so also because there appeared at that time to the pious man One who in after ages made himself manifest through the Virgin for the salvation of mankind. Each, after the manner of his faith, does honour to the place, some praying to the God of all, some invoking the angels and pouring wine, or offering incense, or an ox, or a goat, or a sheep, or a cock. For every man fattened a valuable animal throughout the year, vowing to keep it for himself and his family to feast upon at the festival on the spot. And all of them here refrain from women, either out of respect to the place or lest some evil should befall them through the wrath of God, though the women beautify and adorn their persons specially, as at a festival, and show themselves freely in public. Yet there is no lewd conduct, though the sexes camp together and sleep promiscuously. For the ground is ploughed and open to the sky, and there are no houses except the ancient house of Abraham at the oak and the well that was made by him. But at the time of the festival no one draws water from the well. For, after the Greek fashion, some set burning lamps there; others poured wine on it, or threw in cakes, money, perfumes, or incense. On that account, probably, the water was rendered unfit to drink by being mixed with the things thrown into it. The performance of these ceremonies according to Greek ritual was reported to the Emperor Constantine by his wife's mother, who had gone to the place in fulfilment of a vow.' [1]

[1] Sozomenus, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ii. 4 (Migne's *Patrologia Graeca*, lxvii. 941, 944).

Thus it appears that at Hebron an old heathen worship of the sacred tree and the sacred well survived in full force down to the establishment of Christianity. The fair which was held along with the summer festival appears to have drawn merchants together from many quarters of the Semitic world. It played a melancholy part in the history of the Jews; for at this fair, after the last siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Hadrian in the year 119 A. D., a vast multitude of captive men, women, and children was sold into slavery.[1] So the Jewish nation came to an end on the very spot where it was traditionally said to have been founded by Abraham, at the sacred oak or terebinth of Mamre. The tree, or rather its successor, is shown to this day in a grassy field a mile and a half to the west of Hebron. It is a fine old evergreen oak (*Quercus pseudo-coccifera*), the noblest tree in southern Palestine. The trunk is twenty-three feet in girth, and the span of its spreading branches measures ninety feet. Thus in the long rivalry between the oak and the terebinth for the place of honour at Mamre the oak has won. There is not a single large terebinth in the neighbourhood of Hebron.[2]

§ 3. *The Covenant on the Cairn.*

When Jacob fled from Paddan-aram with his wives and his children, his camels and his cattle, Laban pursued after him and came up with the long lumbering train of fugitives in the beautiful wooded mountains of Gilead, to the east of the Jordan. The two kinsmen agreed to make a covenant, and for that purpose they gathered stones, piled them up into a cairn to be a witness between them, and partook of food on the cairn.[3] Here the eating of food

[1] Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah*, xxxi (Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, xxiv. 877); *Chronicon Paschale*, ed. L. Dindorf, i. 474.

[2] Edward Robinson, *Biblical Researches in Palestine*[3], ii. 81 sq.; W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Southern Palestine and Jerusalem*, pp. 282–4; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], pp. 382–4; *id.*, *The Natural History of the Bible*[5], p. 369; Baedeker, *Palestine and Syria*[4], p. 115.

[3] Genesis xxxi. 17–55. In verse 46 the Revised Version translates: 'and they did eat there by the heap,' where the Authorized Version renders: 'and they did eat there upon the heap.' The parallels which I adduce in the text make it probable that the Authorized Version is here right and the Revised Version wrong. The primary sense of the preposition in question (עַל) is certainly 'upon', and there is no reason to depart from it in the present passage.

upon the stones was probably intended to ratify the covenant. How it was supposed to do so may perhaps be gathered from a Norse custom described by the old Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus. He tells us that 'the ancients, when they were to choose a king, were wont to stand on stones planted in the ground, and to proclaim their votes, in order to foreshadow from the steadfastness of the stones that the deed would be lasting.'[1] In reality the stability of the stones may have been thought to pass into the person who stood on them and so to confirm his vote. Thus we read of a mythical Rajah of Java who bore the title of Rajah Sela Perwata, 'which in the common language is the same as Wátu Gúnung, a name conferred upon him from his having rested on a mountain like a stone, and obtained his strength and power thereby, without other aid or assistance.'[2] At a Brahman marriage in southern India 'the bridegroom takes up in his hands the right foot of the bride, and places it on a mill-stone seven times. This is known as *saptapadi* (seven feet), and is the essential and binding portion of the marriage ceremony. The bride is exhorted to be as fixed in constancy as the stone on which her foot has thus been placed.'[3] Similarly at initiation a Brahman boy is made to tread with his right foot on a stone, while the words are repeated: 'Tread on this stone; like a stone be firm.'[4] Among the Kookies of Northern Cachar at marriage 'the young couple place a foot each upon a large stone in the centre of the village, and the Ghalim [head-man] sprinkles them with water, and pronounces an exhortation to general virtue and conjugal fidelity, together with a blessing and the expression of hopes regarding numerous progeny'.[5] In Madagascar it is believed that you can guard against the instability of earthly bliss by burying a stone under the main post or under the threshold

[1] *The First Nine Books of the Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus*, translated by O. Elton, p. 16. The original runs thus: *Lecturi regem veteres affixis humo saxis insistere suffragiaque promere consueverant, subjectorum lapidum firmitate facti ominaturi* (*Historia Danica*, lib. i., p. 22, ed. P. E. Müller).

[2] T. S. Raffles, *History of Java* (London, 1817), i. 377.

[3] E. Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), p. 1. Compare Sonnerat, *Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine* (Paris, 1782), i. 81.

[4] *Grihya-Sûtras*, translated by H. Oldenberg, Part ii., p. 146 (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxx).

[5] Lieut. R. Stewart, 'Notes on Northern Cachar,' *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, xxiv (1855), pp. 620 sq.

of your house.[1] The weight of the stone is clearly supposed to counteract the levity of fortune.

On the same principle we can explain the custom of swearing with one foot or with both feet planted on a stone. The idea seems to be that the solid enduring quality of the stone will somehow pass into the swearer and so ensure that the oath will be kept. Thus there was a stone at Athens on which the nine archons stood when they swore to rule justly and according to the laws.[2] A little to the west of St. Columba's tomb in Iona 'lie the black stones, which are so called, not from their colour, for that is grey, but from the effects that tradition says ensued upon perjury, if any one became guilty of it after swearing on these stones in the usual manner; for an oath made on them was decisive in all controversies. Mac-Donald, king of the isles, delivered the rights of their lands to his vassals in the isles and continent, with uplifted hands and bended knees, on the black stones; and in this posture, before many witnesses, he solemnly swore that he would never recall those rights which he then granted; and this was instead of his great seal. Hence it is that when one was certain of what he affirmed he said positively, I have freedom to swear this matter upon the black stones.'[3] Again, in the island of Fladda, another of the Hebrides, there used to be a round blue stone on which people swore decisive oaths.[4] When two Bogos of eastern Africa have a dispute, they will sometimes settle it at a certain stone, which one of them mounts. His adversary calls down the most dreadful curses on him if he forswears himself, and to every curse the man on the stone answers 'Amen!'[5] At Ghosegong in the Garrow Hills of north-eastern Bengal, there is a stone on which the natives swear their most solemn oaths. In doing so they first salute the stone, then with their hands joined and uplifted, and their eyes steadfastly fixed on the hills, they call on Mahadeva to

[1] Father Abinale, 'Astrologie Malgache,' *Missions Catholiques*, xi (1879), p. 482: *Qui va enterrer un caillou au pied du grand poteau de la case ou sous le seuil de la porte, a l'effet de se donner un destin de poids et de fidélité, après s'etre lavé d'un destin d'inconstance.*

[2] Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*. 7 and 55; Plutarch, *Solon*, 25; Pollux, viii. 86.

[3] Martin, 'Description of the Western Islands of Scotland,' in Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, iii. 657.

[4] Martin, *op. cit.*, pp. 627 sq.

[5] W. Munzinger, *Sitten und Recht der Bogos* (Winterthur, 1859), pp. 33 sq.

witness to the truth of what they affirm. After that they again touch the stone with all the appearance of the utmost fear and bow their heads to it, calling again on Mahadeva. And while they make their declaration they look steadfastly to the hills and keep their right hand on the stone.' So in Samoa, when suspected thieves swore to their innocence in the presence of chiefs, they 'laid a handful of grass on the stone, or whatever it was, which was supposed to be the representative of the village god, and, laying their hand on it, would say, "In the presence of our chiefs now assembled, I lay my hand on the stone. If I stole the thing may I speedily die."'[2]

In this last case, and perhaps in some of the others, the stone appears to be conceived as instinct with a divine life which enables it to hear the oath, to judge of its truth, and to punish perjury. Oaths sworn upon stones thus definitely conceived as divine are clearly religious in character, since they involve an appeal to a supernatural power who visits transgressors with his anger. But in some of the preceding instances the stone is apparently supposed to act purely through the physical properties of weight, solidity and inertia; accordingly in these cases the oath, or whatever the ceremony may be, is purely magical in character. The man absorbs the valuable properties of the stone just as he might absorb electrical force from a battery; he is, so to say, petrified by the stone in the one case just as he is electrified by the electricity in the other. The religious and the magical aspects of the oath on a stone need not be mutually exclusive in the minds of the swearers. Vagueness and confusion are characteristic of primitive thought and must always be allowed for in our attempts to resolve that strange compound into its elements.

These two different strains of thought, the religious and the magical, seem both to enter into the biblical account of the covenant made by Jacob and Laban on the cairn. For on the one hand the parties to the covenant apparently attribute life and consciousness to the stone by solemnly calling it to witness their agreement,[3] just as Joshua called on the great stone under the oak to be a witness, because the stone had heard all the words that the

[1] J. Eliot, 'Observations on the inhabitants of the Garrow hills,' *Asiatic Researches*, iii.[5] (London, 1807), pp. 30 sq.

[2] G. Turner, *Samoa*, p. 184.

[3] Genesis xxxi. 47–52.

Lord spake unto Israel.[1] And on the other hand the act of eating food together on the cairn, if I am right, is best explained as an attempt on the part of the two covenanters to establish a sympathetic bond of unity between them by partaking of a common meal, while at the same time they strengthened and tightened the bond by absorbing into their system the strength and solidity of the stones on which they were seated.

If any reader afflicted with a sceptical turn of mind still doubts whether the ground on which a man stands in swearing can affect the moral quality of his oath, I would remind him of a passage in Procopius which should set his doubts at rest. That veracious historian tells how a Persian king contrived to wring the truth from a reluctant witness who had every motive and desire to perjure himself. When Pacurius reigned over Persia, he suspected that his vassal, Arsaces king of Armenia, meditated a revolt. So he sent for him and taxed him to his face with disloyalty. The king of Armenia indignantly repelled the charge, swearing by all the gods that such a thought had never entered his mind. Thereupon the king of Persia, acting on a hint from his magicians, took steps to unmask the traitor. He caused the floor of the royal pavilion to be spread with muck, one half of it with muck from Persia and the other half with muck from Armenia. Then on the floor so prepared he walked up and down with his vassal, reproaching him with his treacherous intentions. The replies of the culprit were marked by the most extraordinary discrepancies. So long as he trod the Persian muck, he swore with the most dreadful oaths that he was the faithful slave of the Persian king; but as soon as he trod the Armenian muck his tone changed, and he turned fiercely on his liege-lord, threatening him with vengeance for his insults and bragging of what he would do when he regained his liberty. Yet the moment he set foot again on the Persian muck he cringed and fawned as before, entreating the mercy of his suzerain in the most pitiful language. The ruse was successful: the murder was out: the traitor stood self-revealed. Yet being one of the blood royal, for he was an Arsacid, he might not be put to death. So they did to him what was regularly done to erring princes. They shut him up for life in a prison called the Castle of Oblivion; because whenever a prisoner had passed within its gloomy portal and the door

[1] Joshua xxiv. 26 sq. See above, pp. 126 sq.

had closed on him his name might never again be mentioned under pain of death. There traitors rotted, and there the perjured king of Armenia ended his days.[1]

§ 4. *Jacob at the ford of the Jabbok.*

After parting from Laban at the cairn, Jacob, with his wives and children, his flocks and his herds, pursued his way southward to meet his brother Esau. From the breezy, wooded heights of the mountains of Gilead he now plunged down into the profound ravine of the Jabbok thousands of feet below. The descent occupies several hours, and the traveller who accomplishes it feels that, in reaching the bottom of the deep glen, he has passed into a different climate. From the pine-woods and chilly winds of the high uplands he descends first in about an hour's time to the balmy atmosphere of the village of Burmeh, embowered in fruit-trees, shrubs, and flowers, where the clear cold water of a fine fountain will slake his thirst at the noonday rest. Still continuing the descent, he goes steeply down another two thousand feet to find himself breathing a hot-house air amid luxuriant semi-tropical vegetation in the depths of the great lyn of the Jabbok. The gorge is in the highest degree wild and picturesque. On either hand the cliffs rise almost perpendicularly to a great height; you look up the precipices or steep banks to the sky-line far above. At the bottom of this mighty chasm the Jabbok flows with a powerful current, its blue-grey water fringed and hidden even at a short distance by a dense jungle of tall oleanders, whose crimson blossoms add a glow of colour to the glen in early summer. The Blue River, for such is its modern name, runs fast and strong. Even in ordinary times the water reaches to the horses' girths, and sometimes the stream is quite unfordable, the flood washing grass and bushes high up the banks on either hand. On the opposite or southern side the ascent from the ford is again exceedingly steep. The path winds up and up; the traveller must dismount and lead his horse.[2] It was up that

[1] Procopius, *De Bello Persico*, i. 5.

[2] W. M. Thomson, *The Land and the Book, Lebanon, Damascus, and beyond Jordan*, pp. 583 sqq.; H. B. Tristram, *The Land of Israel*[3], p. 549. The ford here described is that of Mukhâdat en Nusraniyeh, 'the Ford of the Christian Woman,' on the road between Reimûn and Shihân. It is the ford on the regular road from north to south, and is probably therefore the one at which tradition placed the passage

long ascent that Jacob, lingering alone by the ford in the gloaming, watched the camels labouring and heard the cries of the drivers growing fainter and fainter above him, till sight and sound of them alike were lost in the darkness and the distance.

The scene may help us to understand the strange adventure which befell Jacob at the passage of the river. He had sent his wives, his handmaids, and his children, riding on camels, across the river, and all his flocks and herds had preceded or followed them. So he remained alone at the ford. It was night, probably a moonlight summer night; for it is unlikely that with such a long train he would have attempted to ford the river in the dark or in the winter, when the current would run fast and deep. Be that as it may, in the moonlight or in the dark, beside the rushing river, a man wrestled with him all night long, till morning flushed the wooded crests of the ravine high above the struggling pair in the shadows below. The stranger looked up and saw the light and said, 'Let me go, for the day breaketh.' So the ghost of Hamlet's father faded at cockcrow; so Mephistopheles in the prison warned Faust, with the hammering of the gallows in his ears, to hurry, for the day, Gretchen's last day, was breaking. But Jacob clung to the man and said, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.' The stranger asked him his name, and when Jacob told it he said, 'Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed.' But when Jacob inquired of him, 'Tell me, I pray thee, thy name,' the man refused to mention it, and having given the blessing which Jacob had extorted, he vanished. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, that is the Face of God; 'For,' said he, 'I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.' Soon after the sun rose and shone on Jacob, and as it did so he limped; for in the struggle his adversary had touched him on the hollow of the thigh.

of Jacob with his family and his herds. In describing the gorge and the ford I have followed closely the accounts of Thomson and Tristram, who both passed this way and wrote as eye-witnesses. A very different impression of the scenery of the Jabbok is given by Professor G. A. Smith's eloquent description (*Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, p. 584), which probably applies mainly either to the upper or the lower reaches of the river, before it has entered the great cañon, or after it has emerged from it into the broad strath of the Jordan. In these districts, accordingly, it would seem that the aspect of the river and its banks is one of pastoral peace and sweet rural charm, a landscape of Constable rather than of Salvator Rosa.

'Therefore the children of Israel eat not the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.'[1]

The story is obscure, and it is probable that some of its original features have been deliberately modified or omitted by the compilers of Genesis because they savoured of heathendom. Hence any explanation of it must be to a great extent conjectural. But taking it in connexion with the natural features of the place where the scene of the story is laid, and with the other legends of a similar character which I shall adduce, we may perhaps provisionally suppose that Jacob's mysterious adversary was the spirit or jinnee of the river, and that the struggle was purposely sought by Jacob for the sake of obtaining his blessing. This would explain why he sent on his long train of women, servants, and animals, and waited alone in the darkness by the ford. He might calculate that the shy river-god, scared by the trampling and splashing of so great a caravan through the water, would lurk in a deep pool or a brake of oleanders at a safe distance, and that when all had passed and silence again reigned, except for the usual monotonous swish of the current, curiosity would lead him to venture out from his lair and inspect the ford, the scene of all this hubbub and disturbance. Then the subtle Jacob, lying in wait, would pounce out and grapple with him till he had obtained the coveted blessing. It was thus that Menelaus caught the shy sea-god Proteus sleeping at high noon among the seals on the yellow sands, and compelled him reluctantly to say his sooth.[2] It was thus that Peleus caught the sea-goddess Thetis and won her, a Grecian Undine, for his wife.[3] In both these Greek legends the supple, slippery water-spirit writhes in the grip of his or her captor, slipping through his hands again and again and shifting his or her shape from lion to serpent, from serpent to water, and so forth, in the effort to escape; not till he is at the end of all his shifts and sees no hope of evading his determined adversary does he at last consent to grant the wished-for boon. So, too, when Hercules wrestled with the river-god Achelous for the possession of the fair Dejanira, the water-sprite turned himself first into a serpent and then into

[1] Genesis xxxi. 54–xxxii. For the camels on which Jacob's family rode, see *id.* xxxi. 17.

[2] Homer, *Odyssey* iv. 354–570.

[3] Apollodorus, iii. 13. 5; Scholiast on Pindar, *Nem.* iii. 60.

a bull in order to give the brawny hero the slip; but all in vain.[1]

These parallels suggest that in the original form of the tale Jacob's adversary may in like manner have shifted his shape to evade his importunate suitor. A trace of such divine metamorphoses perhaps survives in the story of God's revelation of himself to Elijah on Mount Horeb; the wind, the earthquake, and the fire in that sublime narrative may in the first version of it have been disguises assumed, one after the other, by the reluctant deity until, vanquished by the prophet's perseverance, he revealed himself in a still small voice.[2] For it is to be observed that water-spirits are not the only class of supernatural beings for whom men have laid wait in order to wring from them a blessing or an oracle. Thus the Phrygian god Silenus is said, in spite of his dissipated habits, to have possessed a large stock of general information which, like Proteus, he only imparted on compulsion. So Midas, king of Phrygia, caught him by mixing wine with the water of a spring from which, in a moment of weakness, the sage had condescended to drink. When he woke from his drunken nap, Silenus found himself a prisoner, and he had to hold high discourse on the world and the vanity of human life before the king would let him go. Some of the gravest writers of antiquity have bequeathed to us a more or less accurate report of the sermon which the jolly toper preached beside the plashing wayside spring or, according to others, in a bower of roses.[3] By a stratagem like that of Midas it is said that Numa caught the rustic deities Picus and Faunus and compelled them to draw down Jupiter himself from the sky by their charms and spells.[4]

The view that Jacob's adversary at the ford of the Jabbok was the river-god himself may perhaps be confirmed by the observation that it has been a common practice with many peoples to propitiate the fickle and dangerous spirits of the water at fords. Hesiod says that when you are about to ford a river you should look at the running water and pray and wash your hands; for he who wades

[1] Ovid, *Metamorph.* ix. 62–86; compare Sophocles, *Trachiniae*, 9–21.

[2] 1 Kings xix. 8–13.

[3] Xenophon, *Anabasis*, i. 2. 13; Pausanias, i. 4. 5; Herodotus, viii. 138; Plutarch, *Consol. ad Apollon.* 27; Aelian, *Var. Hist.* iii. 18; Philostratus, *Vit. Apollon.* vi. 27; Himerius, *Eclog.* xvi. 5; Cicero, *Tuscul. Disput.* i. 48. 114; Servius on Virgil, *Ecl.* vi. 13.

[4] Ovid, *Fasti*, iii. 289–348.

through a stream with unwashed hands incurs the wrath of the gods.[1] When the Spartan king Cleomenes, intending to invade Argolis, came with his army to the banks of the Erasinus, he sacrificed to the river, but the omens were unfavourable to his crossing. Thereupon the king remarked that he admired the patriotism of the river-god in not betraying his people, but that he would invade Argolis in spite of him. With that he led his men to the sea-shore, sacrificed a bull to the sea, and transported his army in ships to the enemy's country.[2] When the Persian host under Xerxes came to the river Strymon in Thrace, the Magians sacrificed white horses and performed other strange ceremonies before they crossed the stream.[3] Lucullus at the head of a Roman army sacrificed a bull to the Euphrates at his passage of the river.[4] 'On the river-bank the Peruvians would scoop up a handful of water and drink it, praying the river-deity to let them cross or to give them fish, and they threw maize into the stream as a propitiatory offering; even to this day the Indians of the Cordilleras perform the ceremonial sip before they will pass a river on foot or horseback.'[5] 'It is a custom among native tribes of South Africa to pay respect to rivers, which would appear to intimate that formerly they were worshipped, or rather that individual rivers were supposed to be the dwelling-place of a spirit. Thus, when a river has been safely crossed, it is the custom in some parts to throw a stone into its waters, and to praise the *itongo*. . . . When Dingan's army was going against Umzilikazi, on reaching the banks of the Ubulinganto, they saluted it, saying, "*Sa ku bona, bulinganto*," and having strewed animal charcoal (*umsizi*) on the water, the soldiers were made to drink it. The object of this was to deprecate some evil power destructive to life, which was supposed to be possessed by the river.'[6] From another writer we learn that Caffres spit on the stones which they throw into the water at crossing a river. He tells us that formerly they 'were in the habit of either sacrificing some animal

[1] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 737–41. As to the Greek worship of rivers, see the evidence collected by R. Karsten, *Studies in primitive Greek religion* (Helsingfors, 1907), pp. 29 sqq.

[2] Herodotus, vi. 76.

[3] Herodotus, vii. 113.

[4] Plutarch, *Lucullus*, 24.

[5] E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*[2], ii. 210.

[6] Callaway, *Nursery Tales, Traditions and Histories of the Zulus*, i. 90, note [20].

or offering some grain to appease ancestral spirits living in the river. The Bushmen used to offer up some game they had killed, or in the absence of that would offer up an arrow.'[1] A third writer informs us that in the belief of the Bantu tribes of south-eastern Africa 'rivers are inhabited by demons or malignant spirits, and it is necessary to propitiate these on crossing an unknown stream, by throwing a handful of corn or some other offering, even if it is of no intrinsic value, into the water'.[2] When the Masai cross a stream they throw a handful of grass into the water as an offering; for grass, the source of life to their cattle, plays an important part in Masai superstition and ritual.[3]

The Badagas, a tribe of the Neilgherry Hills in southern India, believe in a deity called Gangamma, 'who is supposed to be present at every stream, and especially so at the Koondé and Pykáré rivers, into which it was formerly the practice for every owner of cattle, which had to cross them at their height, to throw a quarter of a rupee, because their cattle used frequently to be carried away by the current and destroyed. It is enumerated amongst the greatest sins of every deceased Badaga at his funeral that he had crossed a stream without paying due adoration to Gangamma.'[4] Again, the Todas, another smaller but better known tribe of the same hills, regard two of their rivers, the Teipakh (Paikara) and the Pakhwar (Avalanche), as gods or the abodes of gods. Every person in crossing one of these streams must put his right arm outside of his cloak in token of respect. Formerly these rivers might only be crossed on certain days of the week. When two men who are sons of a brother and a sister respectively pass in company over either of the sacred streams they have to perform a special ceremony. As they approach the river they pluck and chew some grass, and each man says to the other, 'Shall I throw the river (water)? Shall I cross the river?' Then they go down to the bank, and each man dips his hand in the river and throws a handful of water away from him thrice. After that they cross the river, each of them with his arm outside of his cloak in the usual way. But if the day is a Tuesday, Friday, or Saturday they will not throw the water, but only chew the grass.

[1] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir* (London, 1904), p. 10.

[2] J. Macdonald, *Light in Africa*[2] (London, 1890), p. 205. Compare *id.*, in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xx (1891), p. 125.

[3] S. L. and H. Hinde, *The Last of the Masai* (London, 1901), pp. 103 sq.

[4] F. Metz, *The Tribes of the Neilgherry Hills* (Mangalore, 1864), p. 68.

Also, if the funeral ceremonies of a person belonging to the clan of either of the two men are not complete, they will not throw the water. The sacred dairyman (*palol*) of the Todas may not cross either of the holy rivers at the places used by common folk. In the old days there were certain fords where ordinary people waded through the water, but the dairyman had a ford of his own. Nowadays the Todas cross the Paikara by a bridge, but the holy milkman may not make use of the profane convenience. And in the old days no Toda who had been bitten by a snake might cross any stream whatever.[1] Among the Mahafaly and Sakalava of southern Madagascar certain chiefs are forbidden to cross certain rivers, while others are bound to go and salute all the rivers of the country.[2] In Cayor, a district of Senegal, it is believed that the king would inevitably die within the year if he were to cross a river or an arm of the sea.[3]

Though we may not be able to explain the exact reasons for imposing these various rules and restrictions, the general motive which underlies them is plain enough; it is the awe and fear of rivers conceived as powerful personal beings. That conception is well illustrated by a practice observed by the Kakhyeen of Upper Burma. When one of the tribe has been drowned in crossing a river, the avenger of blood repairs once a year to the banks of the guilty stream, and filling a vessel full of water he hews it through with his sword, as if he were despatching a human foe.[4] The same tendency to personify the spirit of a river, especially a rapid and dangerous river, perhaps explains the weird story of Jacob's adventure at the ford of the Jabbok.

The tradition that a certain sinew in Jacob's thigh was strained in the struggle with his nocturnal adversary is clearly an attempt to explain why the Hebrews would not eat that particular sinew. Both the tradition and the custom have their parallels among some tribes of North American Indians, who regularly cut out and throw away the hamstrings of the deer they kill. Without repeating the evidence on this subject which I have cited elsewhere,[5] I will

[1] W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas*, pp. 418 sq., 500 sq.

[2] A. Van Gennep, *Tabou et Totémisme à Madagascar* (Paris, 1904), p. 113.

[3] J. B. L. Durand, *Voyage au Sénégal* (Paris, 1802), p. 55.

[4] Clement Williams, *Through Burma to Western China* (Edinburgh and London, 1868), pp. 91 sq.

[5] *The Golden Bough*[2], ii. 419–21.

merely mention two reasons which the Cherokee Indians assign for the practice. One is that 'this tendon, when severed, draws up into the flesh; ergo, any one who should unfortunately partake of the hamstring would find his limbs draw up in the same manner.'[1] The other is that if they did not do so they would easily grow tired in travelling.[2] Both these reasons assume the principle of sympathetic magic, though they apply it differently. The one supposes that, if you eat a sinew which shrinks, the corresponding sinew in your own body will shrink likewise. The other appears to suppose that, if you destroy the sinew without which the deer cannot walk, you yourself will be incapacitated from walking in precisely the same way. Both reasons are thoroughly in keeping with savage philosophy. Either of them would suffice to account for the Hebrew taboo.

§ 5. *The Bundle of Life.*

When David with his men was in hiding for fear of Saul in the dreary wilderness of Judaea[3], he was visited by Abigail, the wise and beautiful wife of the rich sheep-farmer Nabal, whom the gallant outlaw had laid under a deep obligation by not stealing his sheep. Insensible of the services thus rendered to him by the caterans, the surly farmer refused with contumely a request, couched in the most polite terms, which the captain of the band had sent in for the loan of provisions. The insult touched the captain's nice sense of honour to the quick, and he was marching over the hills at the head of four hundred pretty fellows, every man of them with his broadsword buckled at his side, and was making

[1] J. Mooney, 'Sacred formulas of the Cherokees,' *Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, 1891), p. 323.

[2] J. Mooney, 'Myths of the Cherokees,' *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, 1900), p. 263.

[3] Speaking of the wilderness of Judaea, an eye-witness says: 'The view from the height was most extraordinary; on every side were other ridges equally white, steep, and narrow; their sides were seamed by innumerable torrent-beds, their summits were sharp and ragged in outline. These ridges stood almost isolated, between broad flat valleys of soft white marl scattered with flints, and with a pebbly torrent-course in the middle. There was not a tree visible, scarcely even a thorny shrub; the whole was like the dry basin of a former sea scoured by the rains, and washed down in places to the hard foundation of metamorphic limestone, which underlies the whole district, and forms precipices two thousand feet high over the shores of the Dead Sea.' (C. R. Conder, *Tent-work in Palestine*, ii. 127.)

straight for the farm, when the farmer's wife met him on the moor. She had soft words to soothe the ruffled pride of the angry chieftain, and, better perhaps than words, a train of asses laden with meat and drink for the sharp-set brigands. David was melted. The beauty of the woman, her gentle words, and the sight of the asses with their panniers, all had their effect. He received the wife, pleading for her husband, with the utmost courtesy, promised his protection, not without dark hints of the sight that the sun would have seen at the farm next morning if she had not met him, and so dismissed her with a blessing. The word was given. The outlaws faced to the right-about, and, followed no doubt by the asses, marched off the way they had come. With a lighter heart Abigail hastened to the house where her boorish husband and his hinds, little wotting of what had passed on the hills, were drinking deep and late after the sheep-shearing. That night over the wine she wisely said nothing. But next morning, when he was sober, she told him, and his heart died within him. The shock to his nervous system, or perhaps something stronger, was too much for him. Within ten days he was a dead man, and after a decent interval the widow was over the hills and far away with the captain of the brigands.[1]

Among the compliments which the charming Abigail paid to the susceptible David at their first meeting there is one which deserves our attention. She said: 'And though man be risen up to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul, yet the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as from the hollow of a sling.'[2] No doubt the language is metaphorical, but to an English reader the metaphor is strange and obscure. It implies that the souls of living people could be tied up for safety in a bundle, and that on the contrary, when the souls were those of enemies, the bundle might be undone and the souls scattered to the winds. I think we may safely say that such an idea could hardly have occurred to a Hebrew even as a figure of speech, unless he were familiar with an actual belief that souls could thus be

[1] 1 Samuel xxv. 1–37.

[2] 1 Samuel xxv. 29. The same expression 'bundle of life' (צרור חיים) is applied to a faithful friend in the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus, vi. 16, where צְרוֹר ('bundle') ought not, with some editors, to be changed into צֳרִי ('balm'). See Professor A. A. Bevan, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, October, 1899, p. 140.

treated. To us who conceive of a soul as immanent in its body so long as life lasts the idea conveyed by the verse in question is naturally preposterous. But it would not be so to many peoples whose theory of life differs widely from ours. There is in fact a widespread belief among savages that the soul can be, and often is, extracted from the body during the lifetime of its owner without immediately causing his death. Commonly this is done by ghosts, demons, or evil-disposed persons who have a grudge at a man and steal his soul for the purpose of killing him; for if they succeed in their fell intent and detain the truant soul long enough the man will fall ill and die.[1] For that reason people who identify their souls with their shades or reflections are often in mortal terror of a camera, because they think that the photographer who has taken their likeness has abstracted their souls or shades along with it. To take a single instance out of a multitude. At a village on the lower Yukon River in Alaska an explorer had set up his camera to get a picture of the Esquimaux as they were moving about among their houses. While he was focussing the instrument, the headman of the village came up and insisted on peeping under the cloth. Being allowed to do so he gazed agog for a minute at the moving figures on the ground-glass; then jerking his head from under the cloth he bellowed out to his people, 'He has got all your shades in this box.' A panic ensued among the group, and in a twinkling they disappeared helter-skelter into their houses.[2] On this theory a camera or a packet of photographs is a box or bundle of souls packed ready for transport like sardines in a tin.

But sometimes souls are extracted from their bodies with a kindly intention. The savage seems to think that nobody can die properly unless his soul is in his body just before he expires, since it is the final departure of the soul which is the true cause of death. From this again he infers that if you can only draw out the soul and keep it in safe custody the man in the meantime is for all practical purposes immortal, since in the absence of his soul there is really nothing in him to die. Hence in time of danger the wary savage will sometimes carefully extract his own soul or the soul of a friend and leave it, so to say, at deposit account in some safe

[1] *The Golden Bough*[2], ii. 263 sqq.; A. C. Kruijt, *Het animisme in den Indischen Archipel* (The Hague, 1906), pp. 77 sqq.

[2] E. W. Nelson, 'The Eskimo about Behring Strait,' *Eighteenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*, part i (Washington, 1899), p. 422.

place till the danger is past and he can reclaim his spiritual property. For example, many people regard the removal to a new house as a crisis fraught with peril to their souls; hence in Minahassa, a district of Celebes, at such critical times the priest collects the souls of the whole family in a bag and keeps them there till the danger is over, when he restores them to their respective owners.[1] Again, in Southern Celebes, when a woman's time is near, the messenger who goes to fetch the doctor or midwife takes with him a chopping-knife or something else made of iron. The thing, whatever it is, represents the woman's soul, which at this dangerous time is believed to be safer outside of her body than in it. Hence the doctor must take great care of the thing, for were it lost the woman's soul would with it be lost also. So he keeps it in his house till the confinement is over, when he gives back the precious object in return for a fee.[2] In the Key Islands a hollowed-out cocoa-nut, split in two and carefully pieced together, may sometimes be seen hanging up. This is a receptacle in which the soul of a newly-born infant is kept lest it should fall a prey to demons. For in those parts the soul does not permanently lodge in its tabernacle of clay, until the clay has taken a firm consistency. The Esquimaux of Alaska adopt a similar precaution for the soul of a sick child. The medicine-man conjures it into an amulet and then stows the amulet in his medicine-bag, where, if anywhere, the soul should be out of harm's way.[3]

But perhaps the closest analogy to the 'bundle of life' is furnished by the bundles of *churinga*, that is, flattened and elongated stones and sticks, which the Arunta and other tribes of Central Australia keep with the greatest care and secrecy in caves and crevices of the rocks. Each of these mysterious stones or sticks is intimately associated with the spirit of a member of the clan, living or dead; for as soon as the spirit of a child enters into a woman to be born, one of these holy sticks or stones is dropped on the spot where the mother felt her womb quickened. Directed by her, the father

[1] P. N. Wilken, 'Bijdragen tot de kennis van de zeden en gewoonten der Alfoeren in de Minahassa,' *Mededeelingen van wege het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap*, vii (1863), pp. 146 sq.

[2] B. F. Matthes, *Bijdragen tot de Ethnologie van Zuid-Celebes* (The Hague, 1875), p. 54.

[3] J. A. Jacobsen, *Reisen in die Inselwelt des Banda-Meeres* (Berlin, 1896), p. 199.

searches for the stick or stone of his child, and having found it, or carved it out of the nearest hard-wood tree, he delivers it to the headman of the district, who deposits it with the rest in the sacred store-house among the rocks. These precious sticks and stones, closely bound up with the spirits of all the members of the clan, are often carefully tied up in bundles. They constitute the most sacred possession of the tribe, and the places where they are deposited are skilfully screened from observation, the entrances to the caves being blocked up with stones arranged so naturally as to disarm suspicion. Not only the spot itself but its surroundings are sacred. The plants and trees that grow there are never touched: the wild animals that find their way thither are never molested. And if a man fleeing from his enemies or from the avenger of blood succeeds in reaching the sanctuary, he is safe so long as he remains within its bounds. The loss of their *churinga*, as they call the sacred sticks and stones thus associated with the spirits of all the living and all the dead members of the community, is the most serious evil that can befall a tribe. Robbed of them by inconsiderate white men, the natives have been known to stay in camp for a fortnight, weeping and wailing over their loss and plastering their bodies with white pipeclay, the emblem of mourning for the dead.[1]

In these beliefs and practices of the Central Australians with regard to the *churinga* we have, as Messrs. Spencer and Gillen justly observe, 'a modification of the idea which finds expression in the folklore of so many peoples, and according to which primitive man, regarding his soul as a concrete object, imagines that he can place it in some secure spot apart, if needs be, from his body, and thus, if the latter be in any way destroyed, the spirit part of him still persists unharmed.'[2] Not that the Arunta of the present day believe these sacred sticks and stones to be the actual receptacles of their spirits in the sense that the destruction of one of the sticks or stones would of necessity involve the destruction of the man, woman, or child whose spirit is associated with it. But in their traditions we meet with clear traces of a belief that their ancestors did really deposit their spirits in these sacred objects. For example, we are told that some men of the Wild Cat totem kept their spirits in their *churinga*, which they used to hang up on a sacred pole in the camp when they

[1] Spencer and Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 128–36. Compare *id.*, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, pp. 257–82.

[2] Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 137.

went out to hunt; and on their return from the chase they would take down the *churinga* from the pole and carry them about as before.[1] The intention of thus hanging up the *churinga* on a pole when they went out hunting may have been to put their souls in safe-keeping till they came back.

Thus there is fair ground to think that the bundles of sacred sticks and stones, which are still treasured so carefully in secret places by the Arunta and other tribes of Central Australia, were formerly believed to house the souls of every member of the community. So long as these bundles remained securely tied up in the sanctuary, so long, might it be thought, was it well with the souls of all the people; but once open the bundles and scatter their precious contents to the winds, and the most fatal consequences would follow. It would be rash to assert that the primitive Semites ever kept their souls for safety in sticks and stones which they deposited in caves and crannies of their native wilderness; but it is not rash to affirm that some such practice would explain in an easy and natural way the words of Abigail to the hunted outlaw: 'And though man be risen up to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul, yet the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as from the hollow of a sling.'

Thus I infer that the Hebrews retained down to historical times the conception of an external soul, that is, a belief in the possibility of depositing the soul for safety in some secure place outside of the body. The inference is confirmed by a remarkable expression of Isaiah. In a long list of feminine ornaments he mentions 'houses of the soul'.[2] The expression thus literally translated is unique in the Old Testament. Modern translators and commentators, following Jerome, render it 'perfume boxes', 'scent-bottles', or the like.[3] But it may well be that these 'houses of the soul' were amulets in which the soul of the wearer was supposed to lodge.[4] The commentators on

[1] Spencer and Gillen, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

[2] Isaiah iii. 20 בָּתֵּי הַנֶּפֶשׁ.

[3] 'Perfume boxes' (Revised Version). Similarly Kautsch, Dillmann, Duhm, Skinner, Whitehouse. Jerome's rendering in the Vulgate is *olfactoriola.*

[4] The Egyptians placed little models of houses, made of pottery, on the tombs for the souls of the dead to lodge in. Many of these miniature houses of the soul have lately been discovered by Professor W. M. Flinders Petrie at Rifeh, in Upper Egypt. See W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Gizeh and Rifeh* (London, 1907), pp. 14–20, with plates I, XV–XXII. The hut-urns containing the ashes of the dead which

the passage recognize that many of the trinkets in the prophet's list were probably charms, just as personal ornaments often are in the East to the present day.[1] The very word which follows 'houses of the soul' in the text is rendered 'amulets' in the Revised Version; it is derived from a verb meaning 'to whisper', 'to charm'.[2]

But the view of these 'houses of the soul' which I have suggested does not necessarily exclude their identification with scent-bottles. In the eyes of a people who, like the Hebrews[3], identified the principle of life with the breath, the mere act of smelling a perfume might easily assume a spiritual aspect; the scented breath inhaled might seem an accession of life, an addition made to the essence of the soul. Hence it would be natural to regard the fragrant object itself, whether a scent-bottle, incense, or a flower, as a centre of radiant spiritual energy, and therefore as a fitting place into which to breathe out the soul whenever for any reason it seemed desirable to do so for a time. Far-fetched as this idea may appear to us, it may seem natural enough to the folk and to their best interpreters the poets:

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee
As giving it a hope that there
It could not wither'd be;

have been found in ancient Italian, German, and Danish graves, were probably in like manner intended to serve as houses of the soul. See W. Helbig, *Die Italiker in der Poebene*, p. 50; O. Schrader, *Reallexikon der Indogermanischen Altertumskunde*, pp. 337, 339.

[1] Dillmann, Skinner, and Whitehouse, on Isaiah iii. 18 and 20. Compare B. Winer, *Biblisches Realwoerterbuch*[2], s. v. 'Amulete'. The peoples of the eastern horn of Africa (the Somali, Gallas and Danakil), especially the Mohammedan part of them, wear many ornaments which, at the same time, serve as amulets. See Ph. Paulitschke, *Ethnographie Nordost-Afrikas, Die materielle Cultur der Danâkil, Galla, und Somâl* (Berlin, 1893), pp. 95 sq. Compare F. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), p. 518. On the relation of jewellery to magic, see Professor W. Ridgeway, in *Report of the British Association, Meeting held at Southport*, 1903, pp. 815 sq.

[2] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p. 538. Similarly Kautsch, in his German translation of the Bible, and Dillmann and Skinner in their commentaries on Isaiah. In another passage (xxvi. 16) Isaiah uses the same word (לַחַשׁ) in the phrase 'compulsion of a spell' (where we must read עָקַן for עֵקֶב with many critics; see Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *op. cit.*, pp. 538, 848).

[3] Genesis ii. 7.

But thou thereon didst only breathe
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself but thee! [1]

Or again:

Ihr verblühet, süsse Rosen,
Meine Liebe trug euch nicht.

But if beauty can thus be thought to give of her life, her soul, to the soul of the rose to keep it fadeless, it is not extravagant to suppose that she can breathe her soul also into her scent-bottle. At all events these old-world fancies, if such indeed they are, would explain very naturally why a scent-bottle should be called a 'house of the soul'. But the folk-lore of scents has yet to be studied. In investigating it, as every other branch of folk-lore, the student may learn much from the poets, who perceive by intuition what most of us have to learn by a laborious collection of facts. Indeed without some touch of poetic fancy it is hardly possible to enter into the heart of the people. A frigid rationalist will knock in vain at the magic rose-wreathed portal of fairyland. The porter will not open to Mr. Gradgrind.

[1] 'Jonson's learned sock' was on when he wrote these beautiful verses. See Philostratus, *Epist.* 2: Πέπομφά σοι στέφανον ῥόδων, οὐ σὲ τιμῶν, καὶ τοῦτο μὲν γάρ, ἀλλ' αὐτοῖς τι χαριζόμενος τοῖς ῥόδοις, ἵνα μὴ μαρανθῇ. And again *Epist.* 46: Εὖ πεποίηκας στρωμνῇ χρησάμενος τοῖς ῥόδοις· . . . εἰ δὲ βούλει τι φίλῳ χαρίζεσθαι, τὰ λείψανα αὐτῶν ἀντίπεμψον μηκέτι πνέοντα ῥόδων μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ σοῦ. And the thought of the first stanza of the same song:

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup
And I'll not look for wine,

is also borrowed from the same elegant writer. See Philostratus, *Epist.* 33: Ἐμοὶ δὲ μόνοις πρόπινε τοῖς ὄμμασιν . . . εἰ δὲ βούλει, τὸν μὲν οἶνον μὴ παραπόλλυε, μόνου δ' ἐμβαλοῦσα ὕδατος καὶ τοῖς χείλεσι προσφέρουσα πλήρου φιλημάτων τὸ ἔκπωμα καὶ οὕτως δίδου τοῖς δεομένοις. Elsewhere Philostratus, whose fancy, like that of Herrick, seems to have run much on love and roses, plays on the same thoughts (*Epist.* 60 and 63). Another passage in his letters (*Epist.* 55, μαραίνεται καὶ γυνὴ μετὰ ῥόδων, ἂν βραδύνῃ. Μὴ μέλλε, ὦ καλή· συμπαίξωμεν, στεφανωσώμεθα τοῖς ῥόδοις, ξυνδράμωμεν) might have served as a text to Herrick's

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may.

But without doubt the English poet drew his inspiration from living roses in English gardens and English hedges, not from dead Greek roses in the dusty pages of Philostratus.

§ 6. *Not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk.*

A modern reader is naturally startled when among the solemn commandments professedly given by God to ancient Israel he finds the precept: 'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.'[1] And his surprise is not lessened but greatly increased by an attentive study of one of the three passages in which the command is recorded; for the context of the passage seems to show, as some eminent critics from Goethe downwards have pointed out, that the injunction not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk was actually one of the original Ten Commandments.[2] The passage in question occurs in the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus. In this chapter we read an account of what purports to be the second revelation to Moses of the Ten Commandments, after that in his anger at the idolatry of the Israelites he had broken the tables of stone on which the first version of the commandments was written. What is professedly given us in the chapter is therefore a second edition of the Ten Commandments. That this is so appears to be put beyond the reach of doubt by the verses which introduce and which follow the list of commandments. Thus the chapter begins: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which thou brakest.'[3] Then follows an account of God's interview with Moses on Mount Sinai and of the second revelation of the commandments. And at the close of the passage we read: 'And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.'[4] Thus unquestionably the writer of the chapter regarded the commandments given in it as the Ten Commandments.

But here a difficulty arises; for the commandments recorded in

[1] Exodus xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26; Deuteronomy xiv. 21.

[2] Professor Wellhausen reached this conclusion independently before he found that he had been anticipated by Goethe. See J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*[2] (Berlin, 1889), pp. 86 sqq., 327–33; K. Budde, *Geschichte der althebräischen Litteratur* (Leipsic, 1906), pp. 94–6.

[3] Exodus xxxiv. 1.

[4] Exodus xxxiv. 27, 28.

this chapter agree only in part with the commandments contained in the far more familiar version of the Decalogue which we read in the twentieth chapter of Exodus and again in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy. Moreover, in that second version of the Decalogue, with which we are here concerned, the commandments are not given with the brevity and precision which characterize the first version, so that it is less easy to define them exactly. Accordingly critics have differed as to some details in their enumeration of the precepts. The following is the enumeration given by Professor Budde in his recent *History of Ancient Hebrew Literature*[1]:

1. Thou shalt worship no other god.
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.
3. All the firstborn are mine.
4. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest.
5. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep in the month when the corn is in ear.[2]
6. Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, even of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end.
7. Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread.
8. The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning.[3]
9. The first of the firstfruits of thy ground thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God.
10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.

The difference between this version of the Decalogue and the one with which we are familiar will at once strike the reader. Here morality is totally absent. The commandments without exception refer purely to matters of ritual. They are religious in the strict sense of the word, for they define with scrupulous, almost niggling, precision the proper relation of man to God. But of the relations of man to man, not a word. The attitude of God to man in these commandments is like that of a feudal lord to his vassals.

[1] K. Budde, *Geschichte der althebräischen Litteratur*, p. 95.

[2] This commandment does not appear in Exodus xxxiv. but it occurs in the parallel version of the Decalogue in Exodus xxiii. 15.

[3] The version of the commandment given in Exodus xxiii. 18 is here preferred to the different version in the parallel passage Exodus xxxiv. 25: 'Neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning.'

He stipulates that they shall render him his dues to the utmost farthing, but what they do to each other, so long as they do not interfere with the payment of his feu duties, is no concern of his. How different from the six concluding commandments of the other version: 'Thou shalt honour thy father and mother; thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.'[1]

If we ask which of these two discrepant versions of the Decalogue is the older, the answer cannot be doubtful. It would happily be contrary to all analogy to suppose that precepts of morality, which had originally formed part of an ancient code, were afterwards struck out of it to make room for precepts concerned with mere points of ritual. Is it credible that, for example, the command, 'Thou shalt not steal,' was afterwards omitted from the code and its place taken by the command, 'The fat of my feast shall not remain all night until the morning'? or that the command, 'Thou shalt do no murder,' was ousted by the command, 'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk'? The whole course of human history refutes the supposition. All probability is in favour of the view that the moral version of the Decalogue, if we may call it so from its predominant element, was later than the ritual version, because the general trend of civilization has been, still is, and we hope always will be, towards insisting on the superiority of morality to ritual. It was this insistence which lent force to the teaching, first, of the Hebrew prophets, and afterwards of Christ himself. We should probably not be far wrong in surmising that the change from the ritual to the moral Decalogue was carried out under prophetic influence.[2]

[1] Exodus xx. 12–17.

[2] In assuming the ritual version of the Decalogue (Exodus xxxiv) to be older than the moral version, I agree with Professors Wellhausen and Budde (*ll. cc.*). But in estimating the comparative age of the two versions I purposely leave out of account the difference of the two documents (the Jehovistic and the Elohistic) in which they are found, because critics are not agreed as to the relative age of these two documents. If, however, some of the best critics (including Kuenen, Wellhausen, Stade, and Driver) are right in assigning the priority to the Jehovistic document, this would be another argument in favour of the earlier date of the ritual Decalogue (Exodus xxxiv), since it is Jehovistic; whereas the moral Decalogue

But if we may safely assume, as I think we may, that the ritual version of the Decalogue is the older of the two, we have still to ask why was the precept not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk deemed of such vital importance that it was assigned a place in the primitive code of the Hebrews, while precepts which seem to us infinitely more important, such as the prohibitions of murder, theft, and adultery, were excluded from it?[1] To suppose with some commentators, ancient and modern, that the precept is one of refined humanity[2] is in the highest degree improbable. A legislator who, so far as appears from the rest of the primitive Decalogue, paid no attention to the feelings of human beings was not likely to pay much to the maternal feelings of goats. It is far more probable that the command was based on some superstitious belief current among a rude pastoral people who depended for their subsistence chiefly on their flocks of goats.

Now among pastoral tribes in Africa at the present day there appears to be a widely spread and deeply rooted aversion to boil the milk of their cattle, the aversion being based on an idea that a cow whose milk has been boiled will yield no more milk, and that the animal may even die of the injury thereby done to it. To take examples. The milk and butter of cows form a large part of the diet of the Mohammedan natives of Sierra Leone and the neighbourhood; but 'they never boil the milk, for fear of causing the cow to become dry, nor will they sell milk to any one who should practise it. The Bulloms entertain a similar prejudice respecting oranges, and will not sell them to those who throw the skins into the fire, "lest it occasion the unripe fruit to fall off."'[3] Thus it appears that the objection to boil milk is based on the principle of sympathetic magic. Even after the milk has been drawn from the cow it is supposed to remain in such vital connexion with the animal that

(Exodus xx) is Elohistic. See S. R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*[6], pp. 29 sq., 116; *id.*, *The Book of Genesis*[4], p. xvi; J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford Battersby, *The Hexateuch* (London, 1900), i. 276, ii. 111.

[1] Robertson Smith thought that the command not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk was directed against a form of heathen sacrifice (*Religion of the Semites*[2], p. 221 note). But he adduces no example of such a sacrifice, nor do I remember to have met with any in my reading.

[2] See A. Dillmann's commentary on Exodus xxiii. 19.

[3] Th. Winterbottom, *An Account of the Native Africans in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leone* (London, 1803), pp. 69 sq.

any injury done to the milk will be sympathetically felt by the cow. Hence to boil the milk in a pot is like boiling it in the cow's udders; it is to dry up the fluid at its source.

On the opposite side of Africa we meet with the same superstition among pastoral peoples. When Speke and Grant were on their memorable journey from Zanzibar to the source of the Nile, they passed through the district of Ukuni, which lies to the south of the Victoria Nyanza. The king of the country lived at the village of Nunda and 'owned three hundred milch cows, yet every day there was a difficulty about purchasing milk, and we were obliged to boil it that it might keep, for fear we should have none the following day. This practice the natives objected to, saying, "The cows will stop their milk if you do so."'[1] Among the Waganda the same rule is stringently observed, and for the same reason.[2] Similarly the Bahima, a pastoral people of Enkole in the Uganda Protectorate, strictly abstain from boiling milk. They believe that to boil it would cause the cows to fall ill and die.[3] They even say that 'if a European puts his milk into tea it will kill the cow which gave the milk. Also the Bairo, who eat sweet potatoes and ground-nuts, are not allowed to drink milk, as it would then injure the cattle; so in the old days before rupees and kauri-shells were introduced butter was a common currency, but they could not sell the milk itself for fear that it might be drunk by some one who was forbidden to drink it.'[4] In like manner the Masai, who are, or used to be, a purely pastoral people, regard the boiling of milk as a crime which they would neither commit themselves nor allow others to commit.[5] The reason for their aversion to the practice is not given, but in the light of the foregoing evidence we may safely assume that they fear to injure or kill the cows by boiling their milk. The same prohibition

[1] J. A. Grant, *A Walk across Africa* (Edinburgh and London, 1864), p. 89.

[2] This I learn from my friend the Rev. J. Roscoe, for many years a missionary in Uganda.

[3] J. Roscoe, 'The Bahima, a cow tribe of Enkole, in the Uganda Protectorate,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxvii. 111 (1907).

[4] Major Meldon, 'Notes on the Bahima of Ankole,' *Journal of the African Society*, No. xxii, January, 1907, p. 142.

[5] P. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Leipsic, 1892), pp. 287 sq. However, milk mixed with blood and heated is given by them to the wounded. But this practice is said to have been borrowed from outside. See O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 162. Compare M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), p. 32.

to boil milk is observed also by the Wagogo, the Wamegi, and the Wahumba, three tribes of German East Africa.[1]

A similar fear of tampering with the principal source of subsistence may well have dictated the old Hebrew commandment: 'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.' On this theory an objection will be felt to seething or boiling a kid in any milk, because the she-goat from which the milk had been drawn would be injured by the process, whether she was the dam of the kid or not. The reason why the mother's milk is specially mentioned rather than milk in general may have been either because as a matter of convenience the mother's milk was more likely to be used than any other for that purpose, or because the injury to the she-goat in such a case was deemed to be even more certain than in any other. For being linked to the contents of the boiling pot by a double bond of sympathy, since the kid, as well as the milk, had come from her bowels, the mother goat was twice as likely as any other goat to lose her milk or to be killed outright by the heat and ebullition.

But it may be said: If the objection was simply to the boiling of milk, why is the kid mentioned at all in the commandment? The practice, if not the theory, of the Baganda seems to supply the answer. Among these people it is recognized that flesh boiled in milk is a great dainty, and naughty boys and other unprincipled persons, who think more of their own pleasure than of the welfare of the herds, will gratify their sinful lusts by eating meat boiled in milk, whenever they can do so on the sly,[2] heedless of the sufferings which their illicit banquet inflicts on the poor cows and goats. Thus the Hebrew command 'Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk' was probably directed against miscreants of this sort, whose surreptitious joys were condemned by public opinion as striking a fatal blow at the staple food of the community. We can therefore understand why in the eyes of a primitive pastoral people the boiling of milk should seem a blacker crime than robbery and

[1] This I learn from my friend the Rev. J. Roscoe, whose information is based on personal contact with all three tribes. However, the prohibition to boil milk is not universal among pastoral people. Thus among the Wataturu of East Africa, who used to live mainly on flesh and milk, the practice of boiling milk was always quite common. See O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), p. 171. And the modern Bedouin of Arabia seem to boil milk without scruple. See J. L. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouin and Wahabys*, i. 63; C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, ii. 67.

[2] So I am told by my friend the Rev. J. Roscoe.

murder. For whereas robbery and murder harm only individuals, the boiling of milk, like the poisoning of wells, seems to threaten the existence of the whole tribe by cutting off its principal source of nourishment. That may be why in the first edition of the Hebrew Decalogue we miss the commandments 'Thou shalt not steal' and 'Thou shalt do no murder', and find instead the commandment 'Thou shalt not boil milk.'

The conception of a sympathetic bond between an animal and the milk that has been drawn from it appears to explain certain other rules observed by pastoral peoples, for some of which no sufficient explanation has yet been suggested. Thus milk is the staple food of the Damaras or Hereros of south-western Africa, but they never cleanse the milk-vessels out of which they drink or eat, because they believe that were they to wash out the vessels the cows would cease to give milk.[1] Apparently their notion is that to wash out the lees of the milk from the pot would be to wash out the dregs of the milk from the cow's udders.

Again, it is a rule with the Caffre tribes of South Africa and with the Bahima of Enkole that menstruous women may not drink milk; and the reasons assigned for the rule prove that the idea on which it rests is the supposed sympathy between the milk and the animal. Thus among the Bahima a woman at her monthly periods must eat vegetables and drink beer; for it is thought that if she drank milk she would thereby injure the cows. But an exception is made in favour of a girl at her first menstruation; her father sets apart for her use an old cow, the milk of which is her only food.[2] The exception is significant. An old cow will soon lose her milk in any case, so it does not signify much if she loses it a little sooner through the pollution of her milk by the menstruous girl. The Caffres of South Africa believe that the cows would die if a menstruous woman tasted their milk.[3] Even the maidens who attend

[1] C. J. Andersson, *Lake Ngami*[2], p. 230; J. Hahn, 'Die Ovaherero,' *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft fur Erdkunde zu Berlin*, iv (1869), p. 250.

[2] J. Roscoe, 'The Bahima, a cow tribe of Enkole in the Uganda Protectorate,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxvii. 107 (1907).

[3] J. Macdonald, 'Manners, customs, superstitions and religions of South African tribes,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xx (1891), p. 138; *id.*, *Light in Africa*[2], p. 221. Compare L. Alberti, *De Kaffers* (Amsterdam, 1810), pp. 102 sq. For a similar reason, probably, among the Bacas of South Africa a woman at menstruation is not allowed to see or touch cow's dung (J. Macdonald, in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xx (1891), p. 119).

a girl at her first menstruation are forbidden to drink milk, lest the cattle should die; the period of seclusion and taboo lasts a fortnight.[1] If a Caffre woman infringes this custom at one of her periods her husband may be fined from one to three head of cattle, which are paid to the chief. Formerly this monthly period of abstinence from milk lasted for seven or eight days.[2] Further, among the Caffres menstruous women are forbidden to cross those parts of the kraal which are frequented by the cattle; for if a drop of their blood were to fall on such a path 'any oxen passing over it would run great risk of dying from disease'. Hence women have to make circuitous paths from one hut to another, going round the back of the huts in order to avoid the forbidden ground. The tracks which they use may be seen at every kraal. But there is no such restriction on the walks of women who are past childbearing, because they have ceased to be a source of danger.[3]

The disabilities thus imposed on women at menstruation are perhaps dictated by a fear lest the cows whose milk they drank should yield milk mingled with blood. Such a fear, Mr. Roscoe tells me, is much felt by the pastoral tribes of Central Africa. Again, the same idea perhaps explains the Zulu custom which forbids a wounded man to drink milk until he has performed a certain ceremony. Thus when an Englishman serving with the Zulus was wounded in action and bled profusely, a young heifer was killed by order of the medicine-man, and its small entrails, mixed with the gall and some roots, were parboiled and given to the sufferer to drink. At first he refused the nauseous dose, but the medicine-man flew into a passion and said 'that unless I drank of the mixture I could not be permitted to take milk, fearing the cows might die, and if I approached the king I should make him ill'.[4] This fear of injuring the cows through the infection of blood

[1] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir*, p. 209.

[2] *Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs* (Cape Town, 1866), p. 122, compare p. 91.

[3] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir*, pp. 238 sq.; *Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs*, p. 93. The huts of a Caffre kraal are usually arranged in a circle with the cattle fold in the centre (Dudley Kidd, *op. cit.*, pp. 12 sq.). Hence the women's paths may be supposed to lie outside the circle of the huts, between them and the palisade which sometimes encloses the kraal.

[4] Nathaniel Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (London, 1836), i. 203–5.

may perhaps explain a Bechuana custom of removing all wounded persons to a distance from their towns and villages.[1]

The same dread probably lies at the root of the stringent rule which among many African tribes, especially of the Bantu family, forbids women to milk the cows and to enter the cattle-fold.[2] But if for some reason a married Caffre woman is obliged to enter a cattle-fold she must bring her husband or her nearest male relative to the gate of the fold; there he lays his spear on the ground with the point inside of the entrance, and the woman walks in on the handle of the weapon. 'This is considered as a passport of entrance, and saves her from punishment: but, even in this case, strict inquiry is made as to the necessity for such an entrance, nor are the men very willing to grant, too frequently, such an indulgence to them.'[3] Amongst the pastoral Todas in southern India the business of milking the cattle is performed by men only, who are invested according to their rank with various degrees of sanctity and have to observe strict rules of ceremonial purity. Toda women take no part in the ritual of the sacred dairy nor in the operations of milking and churning which are there carried on. They may go to the dairy to fetch buttermilk, but they must approach it by an appointed path and stand at an appointed place to receive the milk. Only under very special conditions is a woman or a girl permitted to enter a dairy. Indeed, during the performance

[1] R. Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa* (London, 1842), p. 465. Dr. Moffat could not ascertain the reason of the custom.

[2] Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir*, p. 238; J. Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, Second Journey* (London, 1822), ii. 213; E. Casalis, *The Basutos*, p. 125; *Compendium of Kafir Laws and Customs*, p. 93; F. Fleming, *Southern Africa* (London, 1856), pp. 214 sq.; *id.*, *Kaffraria* (London, 1853), p. 98; Krantz, *Natur- und Kulturleben der Zulus*, pp. 81 sq.; J. Macdonald, *Light in Africa*[2], p. 221; F. Lichtenstein, *Reisen im Südlichen Afrika*, i. 441; H. Schinz, *Deutsch-Süd-West-Afrika*, p. 296; L. Grout, *Zululand*, p. 111; J. Mackenzie, *Ten Years North of the Orange River*, p. 499; G. Fritsche, *Die Eingeborenen Süd-Afrikas*, pp. 85, 183; *Emin Pasha in Central Africa* (London, 1888), pp. 238, 343; Sir H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa*, p. 431; C. T. Wilson and R. W. Felkin, *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (London, 1882), i. 164; R. W. Felkin, 'Notes on the Madi or Moru tribe of Central Africa,' *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, xii. (1882–84), pp. 306 sq.; H. Cole, 'Notes on the Wagogo of German East Africa,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxii (1902), p. 337; W. Munzinger, *Sitten und Recht der Bogos*, pp. 77 sq.; *id.*, *Ostafrikanische Studien*, p. 325. However, it deserves to be noticed that among the Bechuanas, while cows are always milked by men, goats are always milked by women (J. Campbell, *loc. cit.*).

[3] F. Fleming, *Southern Africa*, pp. 214 sq.

of certain ceremonies at the dairy women are obliged to leave the village altogether.[1]

However, this sedulous seclusion of women from cattle is not practised by all pastoral tribes. For instance, the cows are milked by women among the Hottentots, Korannas, and Hereros of South Africa[2], among the Masai of East Africa[3], and among the Dinkas of the Upper Nile.[4] So far indeed are the Namaquas, a Hottentot tribe, from sharing the superstition as to the disastrous influence of menstruous women on milk and cattle that among them, when a girl attains to puberty, she is led round the village to touch the milk-vessels in the houses and the rams in the folds for good luck.[5] With this custom we may compare a practice of the Hereros. Among them the fresh milk of the cows is brought by the women to the chief or the owner of the kraal, at the sacred hearth or sacrificial altar, and he tastes and thereby hallows the milk before it may be converted into curds. But if there happens to be a lying-in woman in the kraal, all the fresh milk is taken to her, and she consecrates it in like manner instead of the chief.[6] Among the Bedouin of Arabia the milch camels are milked by men and lads only, but the sheep and goats are milked by women.[7] Among the Calmucks of Siberia it is the business of the women to milk the cattle,[8] and among the Lapps the reindeer are milked by men and women indifferently.[9]

The pollution of death is also with some people a bar to the drinking of milk. Thus, when a death has taken place in a Zulu

[1] W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London, 1906), pp. 56 sqq., 83 sqq., 231 sqq., especially 245 sq.

[2] P. Kolben, *The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope* (London, 1738), i. 171, 172; J. Mackenzie, *Ten Years North of the Orange River*, p. 499; J. Irle, *Die Herero* (Gütersloh, 1906), p. 121. Among the Hottentots the milk of cows is drunk by both sexes, but the milk of ewes only by women (P. Kolben, *op. cit.*, i. 175).

[3] A. C. Hollis, *The Masai* (Oxford, 1905), p. 290.

[4] *Emin Pasha in Central Africa*, p. 343.

[5] Sir J. E. Alexander, *Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa* (London, 1838), i. 169.

[6] Rev. E. Dannert, 'Customs of the Ovaherero at the birth of a child' (*South African*) *Folk-lore Journal*, ii. 63 sq.; J. Irle, *Die Herero* (Gütersloh, 1906), pp. 79, 94.

[7] C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, i. 261 sq.; J. L. Burckhardt, *Notes on the Bedouins and Wahabys*, i. 239.

[8] P. S. Pallas, *Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen des Russischen Reichs*, i. 314.

[9] J. Scheffer, *Lapponia* (Frankfort, 1673), p. 331.

village, no milk is drunk nor are the cattle allowed to be milked on that day.[1] And with regard to the Caffres of South Africa in general we are told that no person ceremonially unclean may drink milk, and that among such persons are a widow and a widower, the widow being unclean for a month and the widower for half a month after the death of husband or wife respectively.[2] Similarly among the Todas a widower and a widow are forbidden to drink milk for a period which may extend to many months.[3] The reasons for these prohibitions are not given, but in the light of the foregoing evidence we may conjecture that the motive is a fear lest the cows might die if their milk were drunk by a man or woman who was thus deeply tainted with the pollution of death. Yet in apparent contradiction with this fear is the treatment of a widow among the Bechuanas. 'When a woman's husband is dead, she may not enter a town, unless she has been under the hands of a sorcerer. She must remain at some distance from the town; then a little milk from every cow is taken to her, which mixture of milk she must boil with her food. Dung from the cattle pens is also taken to her, and with this, mixed with some *molemo*, she must rub herself. If this ceremony be not gone through, it is thought that all the cattle in the town will surely die.'[4] How these ceremonies are supposed to prevent the cattle from dying, I do not see; but at least it appears that the milk and the dung of the cows are both believed to remain in sympathetic connexion with the animals, since the use of them by the widow is supposed to save the cattle alive. Under certain circumstances maternity as well as death is thought to endanger the herds. In the Nandi tribe of Eastern Uganda, when a woman has given birth to twins, she has to live apart for some months, and may not go near the cattle fold; for if she did, they think that the cattle would die. But one cow is put aside for her, and she drinks its milk.[5] Another curious example of sympathetic magic

[1] A. F. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country* (London, 1836), p. 81.

[2] L. Alberti, *De Kaffers aan de Zuidkust van Afrika* (Amsterdam, 1810), pp. 102 sq.

[3] W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas*, p. 241.

[4] Miss J. P. Meeuwesen, 'Customs and Superstitions among the Betshuana,' (*South African*) *Folk-lore Journal*, i (1879), p. 34. The word *molemo* means both poison and medicine.

[5] C. W. Hobley, *Eastern Uganda* (London, 1902), pp. 39 sq.

applied to the milk of cattle may be mentioned, though it does not fall in with the other instances which I have cited. The Kabyles of North Africa believe that whoever gets possession of the herdsman's staff can conjure the milk of that herd into the udders of his own cows. Hence when he retires to his house in the heat of the day, a herdsman takes care not to let go his staff for a moment. To sell the staff or allow another to get hold of it during the siesta is an offence which is punished with a fine.[1]

Among the Wakamba and Wakikuyu of Central Africa intercourse between the human sexes is forbidden so long as the cattle are at pasture, that is, from the time when the herds are driven out in the morning till the time when they are driven home in the evening.[2] The reason for this prohibition is not mentioned, but we may conjecture that the intercourse of the sexes is supposed to be in some way injurious to the cattle while they are at grass. For a similar reason, perhaps, the most sacred dairymen of the Todas must avoid women altogether.[3] An idea of the same sort may underlie the Caffre custom which restricts the use of fresh milk to young people and very old people; all other persons, that is, all adults in the vigour of life, may only use curdled milk.[4] Among the Bechuanas 'there are two months in the year, at the cow-calving time, which is generally about the month of October, when none but the uncircumcised are permitted to use the milk of cows that have calved'.[5] As the uncircumcised would usually be under puberty, it seems likely that this Bechuana rule is in some way based on the idea that under certain circumstances the intercourse of the human sexes may injuriously affect the cattle. Perhaps the practice of eating milk in the form of sour curds, which prevails

[1] J. Liorel, *Kabylie du Jurjura* (Paris, n. d.), p. 512.

[2] J. M. Hildebrandt, 'Ethnographische Notizen über die Wakamba und ihre Nachbarn,' *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, x (1878), p. 401.

[3] W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas*, p. 236.

[4] J. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu country*, p. 28. Similarly Mr. Dudley Kidd writes: 'Sweet milk is but food for babies, and only a few tribes would drink it. But clotted sour milk is food for men' (*The Essential Kafir*, p. 59). 'In the south of Africa it is only the children who drink milk in a sweet state' (E. Casalis, *The Basutos*, p. 145). Again, in the Kikuyu tribe of British East Africa the milk both of cows and goats is much used, but only children drink it fresh (H. R. Tate, 'Further Notes on the Kikuyu tribe,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxiv (1904), p. 259).

[5] J. Campbell, *Travels in South Africa, Second Journey*, ii. 202.

among the pastoral tribes of Africa,[1] may spring not altogether from a preference for curds, nor yet from the difficulty of keeping milk fresh in a hot climate, but partly at least from a superstition that the sympathetic bond between the cow and its milk is weakened or severed when the milk has been turned into curds or buttermilk, and that accordingly you run less risk of sympathetically hurting the cow when you eat curds than when you drink fresh milk. Some such idea at all events would explain why in the cases just cited the drinking of fresh milk is confined to the young and the old, that is, to the classes who are physically unable to endanger the supply of the precious fluid in the manner indicated. The Bahima seem to suppose that the sympathetic bond between the milk and the cow is severed when the milk is converted into butter; for, whereas they will not sell the milk lest it should fall into the hands of persons who would injure the cows by drinking it, they never had any objection to parting with butter.[2] From all this it appears that any process which converts milk into another substance, such as curds, butter, or cheese, may be regarded, though it need not necessarily be regarded, as snapping the link which binds the milk to the cow, and therefore as enabling the milk in its new form to be used by the profane without injury to the cattle.[3]

[1] F. Fleming, *Kaffraria*, pp. 108 sq.; *id.*, *Southern Africa*, pp. 218 sq.; L. Alberti, *De Kaffers aan de Zuidkust van Afrika*, p. 36; H. R. Tate, 'Further Notes on the Kikuyu tribe of British East Africa,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxiv (1904), p. 259; Sir H. H. Johnston, *British Central Africa*, p. 431; Dudley Kidd, *The Essential Kafir*, p. 59; E. Casalis, *The Basutos*, p. 145; E. Dannert, 'Customs of the Ovaherero,' (*South African*) *Folk-lore Journal*, ii. 63; F. Speckmann, *Die Hermannsburger Mission in Afrika* (Hermannsburg, 1876), pp. 107 sq. The process of making the curds is thus described by Mr. Kidd (*loc. cit.*): 'When the milking is over the milk is taken into the hut, and is immediately placed in the milk sac or calabash. This is never cleaned out, but contains a strong ferment which makes the milk clot immediately. . . . The calabash has a small plug at the bottom by which the natives let off the whey, the curds being the only part they care for.' On the other hand, the Masai drink milk both fresh and sour (M. Merker, *Die Masai*, p. 32), and the Bahima drink it only fresh (J. Roscoe, 'The Bahima,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, xxxvii. 100). The Bedouin of Arabia 'drink no whole-milk save that of their camels; of their small cattle they drink but the butter-milk' (C. M. Doughty, *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, i. 325).

[2] See above, p. 155.

[3] When the Wanyamwesi are about to convert milk into butter, they mix it with the urine of cows or of human beings. The reason they gave to Stuhlmann for this practice was that it made the butter more saleable; but he believed,

Among tribes who hold such views the operations of the dairy aim, so to say, at disenchanting the milk for the benefit of the cow, at breaking the tie which binds the two together lest it should drag the animal down to death.

Lastly, the supposed sympathetic influence of milk on the cow is the reason why the Masai take the utmost pains not to bring milk and flesh into contact with each other; for they imagine that contact between the two would set up a disease in the udders of the cow from which the milk was drawn. Hence it is a rule with them never to keep flesh and milk in the same vessel; different sets of vessels are set apart for the one and the other. For the same reason they seldom can be induced to sell their milk, lest the purchaser should make their cows ill by bringing it into contact with flesh. Hence, too, Masai warriors will not eat flesh and milk on the same day. Their practice is to eat nothing but milk for some days and then nothing but flesh and blood for several days more. But before they pass from the one diet to the other they take a strong purgative in order to make sure that no vestige of the previous food remains in their stomachs; so scrupulous are they not to bring milk into contact with flesh or blood. They think that if they failed to observe this precaution the cows would give less milk. Moreover, even when they do eat flesh and drink blood, they may not do so in the kraal; they must retire to a lonely place in the forest, there to kill a bullock and gorge themselves on its flesh and blood. The reason for this particular rule may perhaps be, either wholly or in part, a delicate wish to spare their cattle the pain of witnessing the slaughter and consumption of their fellows. Further, the use of game, and especially of corn of all sorts, is strictly forbidden to the Masai warrior; if he ate corn he would get no wife. Besides flesh, blood, and milk the warriors may eat only honey and sugar-cane.[1] The reason for

probably with justice, that the real motive was a fear that the cows would lose their milk if this procedure were not followed. The Wanyamwesi do not eat the milk thus polluted; they only use it to smear on their persons. See F. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika*, pp. 78 sq.

[1] J. Thomson, *Through Masai Land* (London, 1885), pp. 429–31; P. Reichard, *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Leipsic, 1892), pp. 287 sq.; O. Baumann, *Durch Massailand zur Nilquelle* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 161 sq.; M. Merker, *Die Masai* (Berlin, 1904), p. 33. Only the last of these writers mentions the supposed sympathetic connexion of the milk with the cows as the reason for the taboo. Among the Wataturu of East Africa any man who ate of a certain species of antelope (called in Swahili *ponu*) was formerly forbidden to drink milk on the same day (O. Baumann, *op. cit.*, p. 171).

the embargo thus laid on game and corn is not mentioned; but on the analogy of the former taboo we may surmise that the motive is a fear of injuring the cows in some way by bringing their milk into contact with these viands.

Similar, though somewhat less stringent, rules as to the separation of flesh and milk are observed by the Israelites to this day. A Jew who has eaten flesh or broth ought not to taste cheese or anything made of milk for an hour afterwards; straitlaced people extend the period of abstinence to six hours. Moreover, flesh and milk are carefully kept apart. There are separate sets of vessels for them, each bearing a special mark, and a vessel used to hold milk must not be used to hold flesh. Two sets of knives are also kept, one for cutting flesh, the other for cutting cheese and fish. Moreover, flesh and milk are not cooked in the oven together nor placed on the table at the same time; even the table-cloths on which they are set ought to be different. If a family is too poor to have two table-cloths, they should at least wash their solitary table-cloth before putting milk on it after meat.[1] These rules, on which Rabbinical subtlety has embroidered a variety of fine distinctions, are professedly derived from the commandment not to seethe a kid in its mother's milk. Taken all together they have probably come down from a time when the forefathers of the Hebrews were goatherds subsisting mainly on the milk of their flocks, and as afraid of diminishing the supply of it as are those pastoral tribes of Africa whose superstitions on that subject the Jews share to this day.

The whole of the rules as to the drinking of milk which have come before us appear to aim at protecting the cows from the harm which an improper use of their milk is supposed to entail on the animals; there seems to be no thought that the wrong act will directly harm the drinker. It is the cows, and not the people, who are the immediate objects of the lawgiver's solicitude, if we may speak of a lawgiver among tribes where custom takes the place of legislation. Hence we may surmise that the elaborate ritual with which, for example, the Todas of southern India have fenced the operations of the dairy was originally designed in like manner for the protection of the cows rather than of the people; the intention, if I am right,

[1] J. Buxtorf, *Synagoga Judaica* (Bâle, 1661), pp. 594–6; J. C. G. Bodenschatz, *Kirchliche Verfassung der heutigen Juden* (Erlangen, 1748), Theil iv. cap. ii. pp. 25 sq.

was not so much to remove a taboo from a sacred fluid for the benefit of the people[1] as to impose a series of restrictions on its use for the benefit of the cattle. The aim of the ritual was, in short, to ensure that the cattle should not be injured sympathetically through the drinking of their milk by improper persons. That the Todas believe such injury to be possible appears from a remark made by a Toda to a missionary. Having ascertained the names of the Toda deities, the missionary was cited to appear before a headman to explain how he had come by the information. 'I told him, that as he had no authority to judge me, I should not answer his question, to which he replied: that I had been drinking the milk of their buffaloes, on which account many of them would die.'[2] This answer seems to imply that the milk of the buffaloes remained in such a sympathetic connexion with the animals that the mere drinking of it by a stranger might cause their death. The implication agrees with the express beliefs of pastoral tribes in Africa.

Surveyed as a whole, the evidence suggests that many rites which have hitherto been interpreted as a worship of cattle may have been in origin, if not always, nothing but a series of precautions, based on the theory of sympathetic magic, for the protection of the herds from the dangers that would threaten them through an indiscriminate use of their milk by everybody, whether clean or unclean, whether friend or foe. The savage who believes that he himself can be magically injured through the secretions of his body naturally applies the same theory to his cattle and takes the same sort of steps to safeguard them as to safeguard himself. If this view is right, the superstitious restrictions imposed on the use of milk which have come before us are analogous to the superstitious precautions which the savage takes with regard to the disposal of his shorn hair, clipped nails, and other severed parts of his person. In their essence they are not religious but magical. Yet in time such taboos might easily receive a religious interpretation and merge into a true worship of cattle. For while the logical distinction between magic and religion is sharp as a knife-edge, there is no such sharp line of cleavage between them historically. With the vagueness characteristic of popular thought the two are constantly fusing with each other, like two streams, one of blue and one of yellow water, which meet and blend into a river that is neither wholly yellow nor wholly blue.

[1] As Dr. Rivers seems to think (*The Todas*, pp. 231 sq.).

[2] F. Metz, *The Tribes inhabiting the Neilgherry Hills* (Mangalore, 1864), p. 43.

But the historical confusion of magic and religion no more dispenses the philosophic student from the need of resolving the compound into its constituent parts than the occurrence of most chemical elements in combination dispenses the chemist from the need of distinguishing them. The mind has its chemistry as well as the body. Its elements may be more subtle and mercurial, yet even here a fine instrument will seize and mark distinctions which might elude a coarser handling.

§ 7. *The Keepers of the Threshold.*

In the temple at Jerusalem there were three officials, apparently priests, who bore the title of Keepers of the Threshold.[1] What precisely was their function? They may have been mere door-keepers, but their title suggests that they were something more; for many curious superstitions have gathered round the threshold in ancient and in modern times. The prophet Zephaniah represents Jehovah himself saying: 'And in that day I will punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their master's house with violence and deceit.'[2] From this denunciation it would appear that to jump on a threshold was viewed as a sin which equally with violence and deceit drew down the divine anger on the jumper. At Ashdod the Philistine god Dagon clearly took a similar view of the sinfulness of such jumps, for we read that his priests and worshippers were careful not to tread on the threshold when they

[1] Jeremiah xxxv. 4, lii. 24; 2 Kings xii. 9, xxii. 4, xxiii. 4, xxv. 18. In all these passages the English Version, both Authorized and Revised, wrongly substitutes 'door' for 'threshold'. The number of these officials is mentioned in Jeremiah lii. 24 and 2 Kings xxv. 18. That they were priests seems to follow from 2 Kings xii. 9.

[2] Zephaniah i. 9. The Revised Version wrongly renders 'over the threshold'. The phrase is rightly translated in the Authorized Version. The English Revisers and Kautsch in his German translation of the Bible have done violence to the proper sense of the preposition עַל ('upon'), apparently for the purpose of harmonizing the passage with 1 Samuel v. 5. Professor S. R. Driver also thinks that the prophet is denouncing a heathen practice of jumping *over* the threshold (note on Zephaniah i. 9, in *The Century Bible*), and Professor R. H. Kennett writes to me that he inclines to take the same view. It might be a nice question of casuistry to decide whether a jumper who clears a threshold has committed a more or a less deadly sin than one who lights on the top of it. In either case many people will find it hard to understand the indignation of the Deity on the subject.

entered his temple.[1] The same scruple has persisted in the same regions to this day. Captain Conder tells us of a Syrian belief 'that it is unlucky to tread on a threshold. In all mosques a wooden bar at the door obliges those who enter to stride across the sill, and the same custom is observed in the rustic shrines.'[2] Similarly in Fiji 'to sit on the threshold of a temple is *tabu* to any but a chief of the highest rank. All are careful not to tread on the threshold of a place set apart for the gods; persons of rank stride over; others pass over on their hands and knees. The same form is observed in crossing the threshold of a chief's house. Indeed, there is very little difference between a chief of high rank and one of the second order of deities. The former regards himself very much as a god, and is often spoken of as such by his people, and, on some occasions, claims for himself publicly the right of divinity.'[3] Again, when Marco Polo visited the palace at Peking in the days of the famous Kublai Khan, he found that 'at every door of the hall (or, indeed, wherever the Emperor may be) there stand a couple of big men like giants, one on each side, armed with staves. Their business is to see that no one steps upon the threshold in entering, and if this does happen they strip the offender of his clothes, and he must pay a forfeit to have them back again; or in lieu of taking his clothes they give him a certain number of blows. If they are foreigners ignorant of the order, then there are Barons appointed to introduce them, and explain it to them. They think, in fact, that it brings bad luck if any one touches the threshold. Howbeit, they are not expected to stick at this in going forth again, for at that time some are like to be the worse for liquor and incapable of looking to their steps.'[4] From the account of Friar Odoric, who travelled in the East in the early part of the thirteenth century, it would appear that sometimes these Keepers of the Threshold at Peking gave offenders no choice, but laid on heartily with their staves whenever a man was unlucky enough to

[1] 1 Samuel v. 5.

[2] C. R. Conder, *Heth and Moab* (London, 1883), pp. 293 sq. With regard to the rustic shrines, the supposed tombs of saints (above, pp. 116 sqq.), the same writer observes (*Tent Work in Palestine*, ii. 221): 'The greatest respect is shown to the chapel, where the invisible presence of the saint is supposed always to abide. The peasant removes his shoes before entering, and takes care not to tread on the threshold.'

[3] Th. Williams, *Fiji and the Fijians*[2] (London. 1860), i. 233.

[4] *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, translated by Colonel H. Yule[2] (London, 1875), i. 336.

touch the threshold.[1] When the monk de Rubruquis, who went as ambassador to China for Louis IX, was at the court of Mangu-Khan, one of his companions happened to stumble at the threshold in going out. The warders at once seized the delinquent and caused him to be carried before 'the Bulgai, who is the chancellor, or secretary of the court, who judgeth those that are arraigned of life and death'. However, on learning that the offence had been committed in ignorance, the chancellor pardoned the culprit, but would never afterwards let him enter any of the houses of Mangu-Khan.[2] The monk was lucky to get off with a whole skin. Even sore bones were by no means the worst that could happen to a man under these circumstances in that part of the world. Plano Carpini, who travelled in Tartary about the middle of the thirteenth century, a few years before the embassy of Rubruquis, tells us that any one who touched the threshold of the hut or tent of a Tartar prince used to be dragged out through a hole made for the purpose under the hut or tent and then put to death without mercy.[3] When the Italian traveller Pietro della Valle visited the palace of the Persian kings at Ispahan, he observed that 'the utmost reverence is shown to the gate of entrance, so much so, that no one presumes to tread on a certain step of wood in it somewhat elevated, but, on the contrary, people kiss it occasionally as a precious and holy thing.' Any criminal who succeeded in passing this threshold and entering the palace was in sanctuary and might not be molested. When Pietro della Valle was in Ispahan, there was a man of rank living in the palace whom the king wished to put to death. But the offender had been quick enough to enter the palace and there he was safe from every violence, though had he made a step outside of the gate he would instantly have been cut down. 'None is refused admittance to the palace, but on passing the threshold, which he kisses, as I have before remarked, he has claim of protection. This threshold, in short, is in such veneration that its name of Astane is the denomination for the court and the Royal palace itself.'[4] Again,

[1] Colonel H. Yule, *Cathay and the Way thither* (Hakluyt Society, 1866), i. 132. The friar's travels began between 1216 and 1218 and ended in 1230.

[2] 'Travels of William de Rubruquis,' Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, vii. 65–7.

[3] Jean du Plan de Carpin, *Relation des Mongoles ou Tartares*, ed. D'Avezac (Paris, 1838), cap. iii. § 2.

[4] Pietro della Valle, 'Travels in Persia,' Pinkerton's *Voyages and Travels*, ix. 26, 31.

the Caliphs of Bagdad 'obliged all those who entered their palace to prostrate themselves on the threshold of the gate, where they had inlaid a piece of the black stone of the temple at Meccah, in order to render it more venerable to the peoples who had been accustomed to press their foreheads against it. The threshold was of some height, and it would have been a crime to set foot upon it.'[1]

Thus Jehovah's dislike of people who trod on thresholds was not a Jewish eccentricity, for it has been shared by Fijian chiefs, Chinese emperors, Tartar khans, Shahs of Persia, and Caliphs of Bagdad, as well as by many persons in a humbler walk of life. The Korwa of north-western India, for example, will not touch the threshold of a house on entering or leaving it.[2] There is a Mongol proverb: 'Step not on the threshold; it is sin!'[3] It was a rule of ancient India that a bride should cross the threshold of her husband's house with the right foot first, but should not stand on it.[4] In the Altmark an old German custom required that on her arrival at her new home a bride should be carried by her husband from the wagon to the hearth of the house without being allowed to touch the earth with her feet.[5] The ancient Roman practice of lifting a bride over the threshold of the bridegroom's house was no doubt merely an instance of the same widespread superstition; it had nothing to do with a practice of marriage by capture, though it has often been so interpreted from Plutarch's time downward.[6] The learned Varro more justly derived the custom from the sanctity of the threshold,[7] and the same view has been rightly taken by some

[1] D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, i (The Hague, 1727), p. 306, s. v. 'Bab,' citing as his authority Khondemir, in the Life of Mostaasem.

[2] W. Crooke, *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, iii. 333.

[3] *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, translated by Colonel H. Yule[2] (London, 1875), i. 372.

[4] *The Grihya Sutras*, translated by H. Oldenberg, part ii, p. 193 (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxx).

[5] J. D. H. Temme, *Die Volkssagen der Altmark* (Berlin, 1839), p. 73.

[6] Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae*, 29. But Catullus (lxi. 166 sq.) knew better. Compare Plautus, *Casina*, iv. 4. 1; Lucan, *Pharsalia*, ii. 359; J. Marquardt, *Das Privatleben der Römer*[2], p. 55; Robinson Ellis, in his commentary on Catullus, *loc. cit.*

[7] Varro, cited by Servius, on Virgil, Ecl. viii. 29: '*Quas* [*scil. sponsas*] *etiam ideo limen ait non tangere, ne a sacrilegio inchoarent, si depositurae virginitatem calcent rem Vestae, id est numini castissimo, consecratam.*'

moderns.[1] Indeed, the Romans recognized a special god of the threshold named Limentinus, who was roughly handled by the Christian Fathers,[2] his humble station in life laying him open to the gibes of irreverent witlings.

These facts suggest that the officers named Keepers of the Threshold at the temple in Jerusalem may have been posted at the door for the purpose of seeing that nobody committed the heinous offence of treading on the threshold. For this purpose they may even, like the warders of the threshold in the palace at Peking, have been provided with cudgels, which they laid over the backs of all who through ignorance, obstinacy, or accident set foot on the sacred spot.

But while the sanctity of the threshold in many lands is certain, the reason for it is not so, and it may well be that different reasons have been assigned for it in different places. However, there are some grounds for thinking that the threshold has often been viewed as an abode of spirits, human or otherwise; and such an idea would quite suffice to account for the superstitions which have gathered round it. In heathen Russia the spirits of the house are said to have had their seat at the threshold[3]; and consistently with this tradition in Lithuania, 'when a newly baptized child is being brought back from church, it is customary for its father to hold it for a while over the threshold, "so as to place the new member of the family under the protection of the domestic divinities." . . . A man should always cross himself when he steps over a threshold, and he ought not, it is believed in some places, to sit down on one. Sick children, who are supposed to have been afflicted by an evil eye, are washed on the threshold of their cottage, in order that, with the help of the Penates who reside there, the malady may be driven out of doors.'[4] A German superstition forbids us to tread on the threshold in

[1] E. Tyrrel Leith, 'Folk-lore of the Threshold,' *Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. 76, § 460; H. C. Trumbull, *The Threshold Covenant* (New York, 1896), p. 36. The latter work contains a useful collection of facts on the folk-lore of the threshold mixed up with some untenable theories.

[2] Tertullian, *De Idolatria*, 15; Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes*, i. 28, iv. 9, 11, and 12; Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, vi. 7.

[3] P. von Stenin, 'Ueber den Geisterglauben in Russland,' *Globus*, lvii (1890), p. 269.

[4] W. R. S. Ralston, *The Songs of the Russian People*, pp. 136 sq. In Sonneberg when a child has the cramp it is laid on the door-sill: Aug. Schleicher, *Volkstümliches aus Sonneberg* (Weimar, 1858), p. 146.

entering a new house, since to do so 'would hurt the poor souls'[1]; and it is an Icelandic belief that he who sits on the threshold of a courtyard will be attacked by spectres.[2]

But why should spirits be supposed to have their seat at the threshold? One possible answer is suggested by a Russian custom. The peasants bury still-born children under the threshold[3]; hence the souls of the dead babes may be thought to haunt the spot. But again we may ask, Why should the bodies of still-born infants be buried under the threshold? An answer comes from northern India. 'When a child dies it is usually buried under the house threshold, in the belief that as the parents tread daily over its grave its soul will be reborn into the family.'[4] A similar belief probably explains the custom, common in Central Africa, of burying the afterbirth at the doorway or actually under the threshold of the hut[5]; for the afterbirth is supposed by many peoples, for example by the Baganda, to be a personal being, the twin brother or sister of the infant whom it follows at a short interval into the world.[6] By

[1] A. Wuttke, *Der deutsche Volksaberglaube*[2], p. 372, § 608. However, in Silesia a contrary superstition enjoins you to be sure to tread on the threshold when you enter a new house; for it is thought that otherwise you will not remain in the house a year. See P. Drechsler, *Sitte, Brauch und Volksglaube in Schlesien*, ii (Leipsic, 1906), pp. 2 sq.

[2] F. Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde*, p. 370.

[3] W. R. S. Ralston, *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 136.

[4] W. Crooke, *Natives of Northern India* (London, 1907), p. 202. A somewhat different explanation of the custom is given by Colonel Sir R. C. Temple (*Panjab Notes and Queries*, i. 123, § 925): 'A case occurred in Ambálá Cantonments, in which a humble couple, Jaiswáras, in, for them, comfortable circumstances, were arraigned for concealing the birth of a child. It was found buried under the threshold. It turned out that infanticide was the last thing the parents intended, for it was a first-born son, and that the infant had died about nine days after birth. and had been buried where it was found, in order that in constantly stepping over it the parents would run no risk of losing any subsequent children that might be born. They said it was the custom of the caste so to bury all children that died within fifteen days of birth.'

[5] Fr. Stuhlmann, *Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz von Afrika* (Berlin, 1894), pp. 391. 674; *Emin Pasha in Central Africa, being a Collection of his Letters and Journals* (London, 1888), p. 84; J. A. Grant, *A Walk across Africa* (Edinburgh and London. 1864), p. 298; J. Roscoe, 'The Bahima,' *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*. xxxvii. 106 (1907).

[6] The evidence will be given in the third edition of *The Golden Bough*. My authority for the statement in the text as to the Baganda is the Rev. J. Roscoe. For an example of a similar belief among the Toba-Bataks of Sumatra see A. C. Kruijt, *Het Animisme in den Indischen Archipel* (The Hague, 1906), p. 25.

burying the child or the afterbirth under the threshold the mother apparently hopes that as she steps out of and into the house the spirit of the child or of its supposed twin will pass into her womb and be born again. On this hypothesis the widespread belief in the reincarnation of the dead would explain the sanctity of the threshold. But it is possible, and indeed probable, that other causes still unknown to us have contributed to shed a glamour of mystery over that part of the house.[1]

§ 8. *The Sin of a Census.*

From two well-known narratives in the Books of Samuel and Chronicles[2] we learn that Jehovah cherished a singular antipathy to the taking of a census, which he appears to have regarded as a crime of even deeper dye than boiling milk or jumping on a threshold. We read that Jehovah or Satan inspired King David with the unhappy idea of counting his people. Whatever the precise source of the inspiration may have been, for on that point the sacred writers differ, the result, or at least the sequel, was disastrous. The numbering of the people was immediately followed by a great pestilence, and popular opinion viewed the calamity as a righteous retribution for the sin of the census. The excited imagination of the plague-stricken people even beheld in the clouds the figure of the Destroying Angel with his sword stretched out over Jerusalem,[3] just as in the Great Plague of London, if we may trust Defoe, a crowd in the street fancied they saw the same dreadful apparition hovering in the air.[4] It was not till the contrite king had confessed his sin and offered sacrifice to appease the angry Deity that the Angel of Death put up his sword and the mourners ceased to go about the streets of Jerusalem.

[1] Among that peculiar people, the Kafirs of the Hindoo Coosh, the rule never to tread on a threshold appears to be reversed: 'For some reason or other, no Kafir seems to be able to step sedately over the raised threshold of a door. He must spring on to it with one foot, however low the doorway, and however much he has to bend his head. Consequently he retires in a sort of miniature whirlwind, his loose garments floating behind him' (Sir G. S. Robertson, *The Kafirs of the Hindu Kush* (London, 1896), p. 115). This apparently was the sort of practice which excited the wrath of Jehovah.

[2] 2 Samuel xxiv; 1 Chronicles xxi.

[3] 1 Chronicles xxi. 16.

[4] Daniel Defoe, *History of the Plague in London* (Edinburgh, 1810), pp. 33 sq. But Defoe probably copied the narrative in Chronicles.

Though we may not presume to fathom the grounds for this divine dislike of a census, we can at least show that it has been shared by savages. The Gallas of East Africa think that to count cattle is an evil omen, and that it impedes the increase of the herd.[1] And the Lapps used to be, and perhaps still are, unwilling to count themselves and to declare the number, because they feared that such a reckoning would both forebode and entail a great mortality among their people.[2] A precisely similar belief seems to have been held by the Hebrews in the time of David, and the pestilence which immediately followed the census was doubtless regarded by them, as in a similar case it would have been regarded by the Lapps, as a proof sufficient to confute the doubts of the blindest and most obstinate sceptic.

[1] Ph. Paulitschke, *Ethnographie Nordost-Afrikas, die geistige Cultur der Danakil, Galla und Somal* (Berlin, 1896), p. 31.

[2] C. Leemius, *De Lapponibus Finmarchiae eorumque lingua, vita, et religione pristina Commentatio* (Copenhagen, 1767), p. 499: '*Censum capitum nec facile inire volebant, nec prodere, metuentes, ne hujusmodi computatio ingentem suorum stragem et funera portenderet et secum traheret.*'