

Imageless Worship in Antiquity.

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AT the last Congress of Orientalists, a new section, under the title of 'Greece and the East,' was introduced. How necessary a step this was, and how much, especially in the department of the History of Religion, we may learn regarding the East from Greek Antiquities, is shown, not to speak of other evidences, by the work¹ of which the following lines are to give an account. One is accustomed to regard the imageless worship of the God of the Old Testament as a mark of superiority distinguishing Him from all the other deities of antiquity, and to assume the use of images as a matter of course and indispensable in the worship of all heathen religions. The circumstance that no image has been discovered of this or the other god is explained as due to an accidental gap, which at any moment may be filled up by a lucky discovery. Uncommonly and mysteriously wide, certainly, was this gap in the case of the discoveries at Mycenæ. While the latter, through a multitude of monuments of every kind, set in the clearest light the oldest Greek civilization, scarcely anything has been found amongst these monuments which could be taken for an image or for the representation of such. This is the point from which Reichel starts, and which he tries to explain.

Some years ago there was found at Mycenæ a gold ring, upon whose surface three figures, probably of women, are portrayed, who beyond a doubt are engaged in a religious act, that of adoration. The object towards which they turn and for which in some way their adoration is necessarily meant, has been hitherto explained to be a temple or an altar. Reichel, however, places it beyond doubt that it is no other than a chair or throne. It is seen from the side, the back is higher than the arms, the legs are all four, without regard to the laws of perspective, presented as visible. A pillar appears to support the seat in the middle, from which Reichel is probably right in supposing that we have to do not with a throne of ordinary dimensions, but with a colossal structure. His conclusion, as simple as it is surprising, is: 'A throne before which an act of worship is performed

¹ *Ueber vorhellenische Götterculte.* Von Wolfgang Reichel. Wien, 1897.

must be that of a god. But an empty throne is, of course, only part of the apparatus used in worship, and cannot be itself the object of adoration. To complete the scene we should expect a divine figure upon the seat. This, however, is wanting. . . . Since no one of course can imagine that any god was ever worshipped in the form of a chair, there must be here a certain amalgamation of realism and idealism; in other words, the visible throne is set up for an invisible god, to whom, and not to the throne, the religious service of the three women is addressed.'

Scarcely is this conclusion announced, when almost innumerable evidences in support of it present themselves. The throne of Apollo at Amyclæ, whose construction by Bathycles is recorded by Pausanias, certainly bore a divine figure, as did that depicted upon the coins of Ainos (p. 16). But in the first of these instances what we see is not a seated figure, but a quite rigid pillar-like statue; and in the second, simply a pillar with the head of a god, having no organic connexion with the throne, but merely erected upon the seat of it. The inevitable conclusion is that the throne and the image originally existed separately, and were only at a later date brought together, and reasons can be adduced also for the belief that the empty throne had the advantage of age. In Apollo's temple at Delphi, Pausanias saw a throne which was said to have belonged to the poet Pindar; and there, too, Herodotus saw the judgment-seat of king Midas. Both of these must in reality have been thrones of deities. Similar traditions attached to thrones at Olympia and Argos. Hence we must conclude that as early as the time of Herodotus the cult of empty thrones was long forgotten. Some of the latter, such as those at Amyclæ and Ainos, were, by means of the addition of divine figures, retained in religious services; to the others legends attached themselves, which brought them down to the realm of men or heroes.

Reichel has occasion, in passing, to refer to the representations on the frieze of the Parthenon. He considers that the robe (*πέπλος*) carried in the Panathenæan procession was destined not for

any of the images of the goddess, but for the invisible goddess herself, thought of, as in Homer, as of gigantic stature, so that the gigantic robe was designed and suitable for her. He discusses at the same time the various kinds of seats which are portrayed upon the frieze or found in the inventory of the Parthenon. By way of supplement, I may add an explanation of the groups of deities on the frieze which is suggested by Reichel's observations. May not the groups of seated deities, as on account of their more stately proportions they have long been rightly considered to be, be understood in this sense, that at least in ancient days at the Panathenæan procession there were borne for all these gods portable thrones upon which, according to ancient belief, they were held to be invisibly seated? In that case, Phidias simply availed himself of the artist's right to present the invisible as visible, so that the gods now appear as enthroned in the midst of the crowd.

But to return to Reichel. He traces divine thrones also at the Acrocorinthus, at the Zeus grotto on Mount Ida, at Rhamnus in Attica, and in Samothracia. Next he crosses to Asia, where he finds the home of the throne cult. First, there is the empty chariot-throne of the sun-god, which, drawn by eight white horses, according to Herodotus (vii. 40), accompanied the expedition of Xerxes; then (from p. 29 onwards) we have a series of rock-hewn thrones in Asia Minor and the islands, till we come to the 'throne of Pelops' on Mount Sipylus, which has been rediscovered by Humann. The throne cult conducts Reichel also to mountain summits upon which the gods were originally conceived of as seated. For this notion he cites Jahweh enthroned on Mount Sinai as the classical example. The links in the chain of development are: 'natural mountain as natural throne of a god; natural mountain with artificial throne; artificial mountain with artificial throne; artificial throne.' The third link in this chain (artificial mountain with artificial throne) is discovered by Reichel in the tower-temple of Bel at Babylon, which, according to Herodotus (i. 181), had in its topmost storey a couch (*κλίση*) and a table for the god, but no divine figure seated upon the couch. He considers the Babylonian tower-temples to have been imitations of the mountain of the gods, and sees in the unoccupied couch a reproduction of the god's throne on the mountains of Western Asia and

in the temples of Greece. Finally (p. 35), Reichel mentions two divine couches which are still extant at Marathus, on the Phœnician coast. Then follows a further rapid survey of the throne cult in remote lands and ages.

A modification of the throne cult is discovered by Reichel in another series of monuments. He is not convinced that thrones proper existed in every ancient sanctuary, but he regards a *seat* for the gods as the most necessary of all ritual apparatus, without which the god's *table*, i.e. altar, would have been impossible. He finds the explanation in numerous ancient representations, particularly on vases, where an altar is shown with a higher part behind the place for the fire. This eminence is explained by Reichel differently from what has been the fashion hitherto. He takes it to be the seat of the god, and, indeed, some pictures show the god, or the animal which accompanies him, sitting in this place. The details cannot be gone into here, but one observation of Reichel's may be noted. Persons fleeing for protection *seat themselves* upon the altar, and are thereby safe. If the altar is the seat of the invisible deity, they actually place themselves in the lap of the latter, and by the most striking symbolical act constitute themselves the protégés and kinsmen of the god.

The conviction that at the Mycænæan era men confined themselves to the worship of invisible gods is strengthened, according to Reichel, by the language of the Homeric epos. Nowhere in the latter is there mention of images for worship (p. 53). The first certain instance of this is found in the 'little Iliad,' in connexion with the episode of the theft of the Palladium (Reichel, pp. 86 f.). On the other hand, some twenty times are the gods designated as 'with the splendid throne,' or 'with the golden throne,' expressions in which Reichel finds allusion originally, not to the divine forms seated on thrones, but to the empty thrones belonging to these gods.

Finally, Reichel attempts also to answer the question, how out of the imageless cult of ancient days the later image worship gradually arose. In carrying out his task he examines carefully all ancient monuments which have a right to be considered divine images. The images in question are not such as belong to a public cult, but 'artificial products intended to satisfy the first crude private wants, by embodying in some way the

mysterious beings who in their unapproachable omnipotence enter so largely into the life of every individual.' It was not the ministers of the temples, then, that introduced images of the gods among the people, but the reverse, it was the people that introduced them into the temples. Only upon certain occasions were the priests accustomed, through terrible masks which they put on, to bring about a personal appearance of the gods. But it is not in this custom that Reichel finds the origin of divine images, but in votive offerings of the people which represented the god. The larger and more precious of these, gradually venerated for their age, accredited by the wonder-tales which attached themselves to them, became in process of time the objects of public worship, and either were united with the empty thrones or succeeded in suppressing these. This process would by no means accomplish itself everywhere at the same time or in the same way; frequently it would be connected with violent revolutions.

What follows is only loosely connected with the main subject. We may omit altogether the more exact exegesis of the passage in Pausanias about the throne of Amyclæ (pp. 88 ff.). On the other hand, the greatest interest attaches to what is said (pp. 77 ff.) about the images of the 'naked Astarte' found in the tombs at Mycenæ and elsewhere. In connecting this, like others before him, with the Babylonian epos regarding the descent of Istar to Hades, Reichel sees an expression of the hope that the deceased, provided with the image of the goddess, naked as she finally reached the underworld, might, like the goddess herself, 'along with her, led by her hand as it were, return and be restored to life and to his friends.' In short, he sees here a hope of resurrection widely diffused in the heathen world in the earliest times.

It is not my part to examine and pass judgment on the correctness of all the above far-reaching observations and conclusions. Let it suffice that I acknowledge having received much personal stimulus from them, and that in the present paper I bring them within reach of wider circles. But I must return to a section on which I have not yet touched, a section which is confined to biblical ground. To the throne cult discovered by him Reichel assigns the Jahweh-worship of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant is to him simply an empty throne of the God, like the throne of

Amyclæ, or, still more precisely, like the portable throne of the sun-god which accompanied the march of Xerxes.

Against this explanation of Israel's shrine, which perhaps may appear to many very attractive, decided protest should, in my opinion, be raised. It is not a throne for the simple reason that it is *an ark*. For even if the name of this piece of ritual apparatus underwent manifold changes in the course of Israel's history, yet it never interchanged its general designation of אָרֹן with any other; and this word means, not only in Hebrew but in nearly all Semitic dialects, 'ark,' 'chest,' 'receptacle.' Such a name is never given to a throne, for which, on the contrary, the Hebrew has the quite common word כִּסֵּא. It would not be called an 'ark' even if, as Reichel boldly assumes, the hollow part under it was used to keep articles in.¹ For the throne would still be the main feature, and only as part of it could one give a special name to the sacred chest and distinguish the ark from the throne. Reichel's assumption would appear to me possible only if the name 'ark' were of later origin and had taken the place of the original designation 'throne.' But the word 'ark' is precisely one that conveys the impression of high antiquity, and no religious motive for discarding the other title can be possibly discerned. No doubt it is a fine conception, that Jahweh in person seated upon His throne accompanied the journeyings of Israel, and looking down from it ordered the battles. But, according to the oldest tradition, it is just of this that one is by no means convinced, that Jahweh *himself* led His people through the wilderness (pp. 24 f.). On the contrary, the ark is regarded as a *substitute* for His presence, He Himself being believed still to be enthroned on Sinai. There is only a seeming harmony between Reichel's explanation and the ancient formulæ of Nu 10³⁵ f., 'Rise up Jahweh,' and 'Set thyself down [read שָׁבָה for שִׁבְתָּה], Jahweh.' For if the ark is a throne, Jahweh sits upon it constantly whether it be in motion or at rest; hence different expressions from the above would have been employed. But there is another consideration which Reichel leaves quite out of

¹ Of course, upon Reichel's theory, these cannot have been sacred stones which represent the deity himself; he rather adheres to the later tradition of the stone Tables of the Law (p. 26).

account. The necessary presupposition for divine thrones is that the people which sets these up conceive of the god as king, which is possible, however, only if they themselves are ruled by a king. This condition is not satisfied in the case of Israel at the period when, according to its own tradition and according to Reichel's opinion, that people received the ark. If, then, the latter was a throne, either Israel must have taken over the Jahweh-worship from a more highly civilized people which was ruled by kings, or the ark must have been of much later origin and never have accompanied the journeyings of Israel at all. Both these alternatives I must hold as excluded.

The validity of the above objections can be tested by the later development and be thereby established. In Is 6¹ Reichel recognizes an *after-effect* of the conception of the ark which he contends for. Quite on the contrary, Isaiah is the first to call Jahweh 'king' (6⁶). He sees Him (6¹) *in the temple*, 'upon a throne high and lifted up, so that the skirt of his robe filled the temple.' It is plain that this throne is *not* the ark, nay, that Isaiah cannot have regarded the latter as Jahweh's throne. Had he done so, then in his temple vision he would have seen Jahweh seated not upon a throne but upon *his* throne (the ark) once for all indicated as such. From the time of Isaiah on-

wards the title 'king' and the 'throne of Jahweh' occur more frequently in the Old Testament, and it can excite no surprise that the latter idea gradually attaches itself also to the ark. Another appellation has to do with this, namely, 'He that sitteth upon the cherubim,' which in 1 S 4⁴, 6⁴ is a later interpolation. Specially strong, however, in this direction is the tendency of the Priestly Writing in the Hexateuch. Reichel is right in citing especially Nu 7⁸⁹; the significant rôle assumed by the כַּפֹּרֶת (E.V. 'mercy-seat'), which is found only in P, is certainly due in large measure to the above tendency.

It is unfortunate for Reichel's theory that from first to last he follows calmly the description of the ark in Ex 25^{10 ff.} (which he cites after the LXX), and gives his confidence throughout to this source. Thus he obtains the latest instead of the earliest conceptions, and can gain no proper ideas regarding what is genuinely Hebrew. Yet, although one must here oppose him in the main, it is a circumstance of sufficient importance that the ancient wholly different conceptions of Israel pass in later times into others which held sway over so wide a circle as Reichel has made probable. And if those are right who hold that in Rev 2¹³ it is the altar at Pergamum that is called 'Satan's throne,' certainly, as Reichel insists, a new and clear light is thrown upon the expression by his conclusions.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

JOHN xvii. 3.

'And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ' (R.V.)

EXPOSITION.

'This is life eternal.'—The article is used before 'eternal life' in order to carry our thoughts back to the 'life eternal' of v. 2; and the conception involved in these words is now dwelt upon in meditation, which find utterance because of the disciples who heard (cf. chap. 11⁴²). Therefore, when Jesus, with His mind full of the thought of the glorification of the Father and the Son, speaks of the eternal life bestowed upon His people, He turns to the manner in which, through the reception of that life, such

a glorification shall be effected by them.—MILLIGAN AND MOULTON.

'That they should know Thee.'—In such a connexion 'knowledge' expresses the apprehension of the truth by the whole nature of man. It is not an acquaintance with facts as external, nor an intellectual conviction of their reality, but an appropriation of them (so to speak) as an influencing power into the very being of Him who 'knows' them. 'Knowledge' is thus faith perfected; and in turn it passes at last into sight.—WESTCOTT.

ETERNAL life is a *knowledge*. This knowledge is not simply verbal and rational. Scripture always uses the word *know* in a deeper sense. When it is applied to the relation between two persons, it denotes the perfect intuition which each has of the moral being of the other, their near mutual approach in the same luminous medium. Jesus described in 14^{21, 23} the revealing act which should,