

An Egyptian idol. The Egyptians said that the bull was born of the lightning. Images of the Egyptian calf Muevis, made of bronze or gold, and covered with the wings of the great god Ra, were familiar objects in Heliopolis. The bull Apis was worshiped at Memphis, twenty miles away. The Hebrews, fresh from Egypt, knew of these gods. They had doubtless seen their taskmasters joining in the processions and in the rites sacred to calf, or bull, or goat. Weak Aaron tried to blend the worship of Jehovab (Exod 32, 5) and the ritual of Egypt. He designed to punish (and possibly to deter) the people by demanding their solid gold earrings for the idol's plating. The Hebrews liked fattened calves (1 Sam. 28, 24; Amos 6, 4; Luke 15, 23), but the ashes of the wooden calf-form must have been bitter in their mouths.—Dean A. A. Wright, D.D.

#### 4. What was the character of this calf worship?

The regular worship paid to idols, consisting in the offerings of sacrifice and of placation, accompanied by feasting and by riotous orgies. Verses 18 and 19 show that the people were broken loose, as the Rev. Ver. at verse 25 states. These terms indicate the utmost abandonment to the lewdness and excess from which the judgments and the ten words and all the restrictions of Jehovab had so mercifully restrained them.—Dean A. A. Wright, D.D.

With Israel the calf-worship was (1) an effort to realize the presence of Jehovab in a visible form. Exod. 32, 5. (2) Having borrowed their image (Muevis or Apis) and thought from Egypt, it was really the worship of a foreign god. (3) It was a violation of the second commandment, and hence a breaking of the terms of the covenant.—Rev. A. H. Tuttle, D.D.

It was not strictly idolatry, but a worship of Jehovab under the symbol of a calf, and so a violation of the second rather than the first commandment of the decalogue. Under this image the Israelites worshiped the god that brought them out of Egypt. But Exod. 32, 8 shows that they did not thus ignorantly worship their god, but knew that they were going contrary to what Jehovab had commanded. Such use of images in worship tends to superstition and idolatry.—Dr. M. S. Terry.

Exodus 32, 6 shows that burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, that is, some of the accustomed forms of worship, were joined with the idolatrous profanations to which the people were excited upon seeing the beheaded object of worship. It is not conclusive from the fact of the idol that the Israelites, in total forgetfulness of their purer and stater worship indulged in all the orgies of Egyptian calf-idol worship; but it is altogether probable that the worship was mixed, being Israelitic and Egyptian, the former element a form, the latter a display of enthusiasm and rebellion.—Rev. J. W. Mendenhall, D.D., Ph.D.

#### 5. Why was idol-worship so severely reprobated and punished among the Israelites?

Idol-worship degrades the worshiper; hence, forbidden. Besides, it was the worship of the heathen or Gentile nations, while the pure worship of Israel was the distinguishing badge of God's people. When the Israelites relapsed into idolatry they parted with the badge of their relationship to God, and disowned his choice of them as his people; hence, it brought upon them the severe judgments of the Almighty. The statutory commandment against idolatry is the first of the divine code. Exod. 20.—Rev. J. W. Mendenhall, D.D., Ph.D.

Because it was the Israelites' greatest conceivable sin. And this for two reasons: 1. It prevented their divine life, which is dependent on the individual worship of God. 2. It was treason to the divine plan in history, for God called Israel for the world's sake, as appears in the terms of the covenant.—Rev. A. H. Tuttle, D.D.

Jehovab had separated the Israelites for himself, and had separated himself for the Israelites. Between them a covenant had been ratified in blood. They had been married to him. They were his bride. Hence their idolatries are everywhere termed adulteries. Jehovab chose this people from among the peoples to preserve to him a seed of righteousness. No other nation had the knowledge of God as One and as Spirit. This knowledge is the salvation of the peoples. Hence the lapses of God's people—their frequent idolatries—merited and received the severest punishments Jehovab could inflict. To pass by this sin and crime would put all sins and crimes at a premium.—Dean A. A. Wright, D.D.

#### Cambridge Notes.

The character of Moses rises to its highest elevation in this narrative of Israel's idolatry. The perfect self-forgetfulness which was his distinguishing feature—for this seems the real meaning of the epithet "moeke"—makes him set aside the splendid temptation to personal advancement, wrestle in an agony of entreaty for a capacious and ungrateful people, and even, like St. Paul (Rom. 9, 3) pray that his own exclusion may buy their pardon. It is important to remember that the second commandment, not the first, was broken by Aaron now and by Jeroboam later. The Shemites always tended toward the worship of sensuous images, just as the Aryans to that of idealized nature, and the Israelites were yielding to their hereditary craving after visible symbols of deity. We may even imagine that the choice of Israel to be the medium of the revelation of the unseen God was partially due to this very repugnance to such a conception. The calf symbol is usually supposed to be an imitation of the familiar Egyptian forms. This does not suit ver. 4; moreover, the Egyptians worshiped only living animals. It is better to suppose it the token of Egypt's foes, the Hyksos (Ewald), or copied from some ancient Canaanitish emblem of deity (Bilimann.) The bull was sacred throughout the East, as is shown, for example, in the Veda, where it is a favorite form of Indra.

VER. 15. *Testimony.* A common Old Testament word for the commandments of God. "To testify" is "solemnly to declare." The writing on both sides typified the completeness of the Law. Ver. 17. Joshua had not heard the true cause, and his soldier's instinct suggested some Bedouin raid on the camp. Ver. 18. We have here a good example of the arbitrariness of much critical document-splitting. Moses certainly speaks in this verse as one who well knows the meaning of the sounds. So that "inconsistency with ver. 7-14" is founded on a mere impression, and a false one. The words of Moses are poetical in form, and are universally allowed a high antiquity. *Noise.* Read voice, as in the other clauses. The word sing is the intensive of that rendered shout and cry. Ver. 19. *Dancing.* The common Eastern accompaniment of enthusiastic worship. Compare the "dancing dervishes" of to-day. It seems to have resembled the impure orgies of the heathen, rather than the pious fervor of David. 2 Sam. 6.14. *Anger.* Blazing up at the sight of a sin too terrible